

# ESSENTIALS OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

"Educating the Educated" Series—No. 12

# Essentials of the Bhagavad Gita

BY

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DEDICATED

With all humility and Love  
to

His Holiness

Srimat Sudhindra Tirtha Swamiar  
of

Sr ee Kashi Mutt Samsthan

(The living Embodiment of the sacred Wisdom of the East).

---



मूर्कं करोति वाचालं पंगुं लंघयते गिरिम् ।  
यत्कृपा तमहं वंदे करुणानंदमाधवम् ॥ १ ॥

“Om ! Salutations unto  
Sree Mādhava, The All-Bliss !  
Whose Compassion can make the mute eloquent  
And the Cripple skip over mountains.”

\*वसुदेवसुतं देवम् कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।  
देवकीपरमानंदम् कृष्णम् वंदे जगद्गुरुम् ॥ २ ॥

“Om ! Salutations unto Thee,  
Thou God among gods,  
Thou, the Son of Vasudeva,  
Thou, Destroyer of Kamsa and Chanura,  
Thou, The Eternal Joy of Devaki,  
Thou, O Krishna, art the World's Supreme Teacher !”

प्रपन्नपारिजाताय तोत्रवेत्रैकपाणये ।  
ज्ञानमुद्राय कृष्णाय गीतामृतदुहे नमः ॥ ३ ॥

“Hail, O Endless Giver to the suppliant,  
Hail, O Holder of the Rod for the truant,  
Hail, Krishna, with seal of knowledge held aloft,  
Hail, O Milker of Gita-Nectar and Preacher !”

\* Krishna is said be born of वसुदेव and देवकी. The भागवत describes वसुदेव as शुद्धसत्त्व, and देवकी is दैवी प्रकृति or Divine Nature

“When the divine birth takes place within us, the scales fall from our eyes, the bolts of the prison open. The Lord abides in the heart of every creature and when the Veil of the sacred sanctuary is withdrawn, we hear the Divine Voice, receive the Divine Light, act in the Divine Power.”

*Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.*

## PREFACE

As in the case of my previous publication—Hinduism and Modern Science—in the preparation of this brochure too I have consulted only the most eminent works, works of master-minds, and confess that in several instances I could not resist the temptation to cull *verbatim* and freely therefrom, so as to preserve the original beauty of style, force and clearness of expression, accuracy of statement and originality of ideas and observations. I have learnt a good deal from them; they are, indeed, my Gurus, and I here respectfully pay my homage and pray for their grace, without which no undertaking can ever succeed.

The translation into English verse is mainly from N. V. Thadani's and many other works.

From my learned Critics I respectfully solicit their criticism, for that serves as an effective eye-opener.

"Ganesh Vilas" }  
P.O. Kodiyalbil, }  
Mangalore-3. }

M. A. Kamath:.

## INTRODUCTION.

THE teachings contained in the Bhagavad Gita are conceived to be due to the Divine Wisdom and Knowledge of Truth possessed by Sree Krishna, and the acceptance of Him as a Divine Incarnation is, indeed, in a marked measure due to His having been the Teacher of that Great Work. Humanity all over the world holds in immortal reverence the memory of only those persons, who have by the worthiness of their lives, as well as by the wisdom of their thoughts and utterances deserved such reverence. It is in the nature of things impossible for any unworthy and hence unlawful usurper to occupy in security for any length of time that consecrated throne of hearty worship and reverential homage, which is to the glory of man, firmly established within his divinely illumined and aspiring heart. Like all the great teachers of religion all over the world Sree Krishna has expounded what He Himself considered the best plan of life and the truest system of religion and philosophy, but at the same time He has distinctly pointed out that all other plans of life and forms of religion and systems of thought are also good and worth knowing so long as they, by their special adaptation to particular human conditions are capable of strengthening the character of man and of enabling him gradually to rise to higher levels of perfection and self-realisation. Man always reached Truth only in proportion to his own capacity to know it, and in accordance with his own comprehensive vision of the Reality which underlies all things. Thus, the line of Sree Krishna's Teaching may be said to be in full accord with the history of development of human civilisation and the growth of man's power of thought and moral capacity in all the varied aspects of his life at all times and in all climes.

Looking upon the life of man on earth as a kind of pilgrimage to perfection, one may easily understand how it is that absolute truth is both unattainable and unassimilable by man, till the holy goal of this illuminating and purifying pilgrimage is reached at last. A few inspired souls among us, when blessed with the rare gift of divine vision may observe and know a mile-stone or two in advance along the road to this goal of human perfection, but even they cannot go alone in an unduly great haste to the goal leaving the large body of the toiling pilgrims far behind; for, if they did so, they would lose their leadership, and through that loss, miss the very purpose of their specially endowed earthly life.

It is thus clear that Sree Krishna was perfectly right in declaring that all plans of life and all forms of religion and systems of thought are worthy of sympathetic recognition and appreciation at the hands of all really wise men, so long as there are to be found, at the various stages on this sacred road to perfection, bodies of pilgrims who are

severally capable of healthily and cheerfully responding to the moral stimulation of one or other of those plans of life and forms of religion and systems of thought.

A plan of life, a form of religion or a system of thought may in itself be very good, very true ; nay, it may even be as perfect as possible under the circumstances. Nevertheless, if it be wanting in this kind of fitness in-relation to those to whom it is offered for guidance it would really be of no use to them.

The value of religion and philosophies is thus dependant upon two factors :

(1) Upon the proportion of realised truth and wisdom contained in them, and

(2) Upon their suitability to strengthen and improve anywhere in connection with any community or individual the happiness and purity of human life and the nobility of human aspirations. In dealing, therefore, with the various philosophical and religious systems and institutions in the World\*, we have to look upon them not as being antagonistic to each other, but as being mutually helpful in evolving the good of man as a whole ; here, if anywhere, we have to rise from the lower to the higher, and from the higher to the still higher, till at last we reach the highest good.

“ Life is a spark divine ” and as such every mortal on earth has in him a certain amount of divinity varying in degree from an atom to perhaps infinity. Viewed from this angle of vision, it is within the competence of every individual to uplift himself. To attach too much of an inferiority-complex to oneself is silly. A midway course is always safer in extreme opposites. The Divine Grace shall ever bless the Seeker after Truth ! ”

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“ Not enjoyment and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way ;  
But to act, that each tomorrow  
Brings us farther than to-day. ”

*A psalm of Life, Longfellow.*

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\* Vide Appendix V.



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अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।  
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थनित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥ (Gita VIII-14)

*"I am easily attained by him,  
The Yogi who remembers Me,—  
To me devoted constantly,  
With mind not wandering any where."  
(Gita VIII-14)*



सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ (Gita XVIII-66)

*"Do thou renouncing Dharmas all  
Take refuge into Me alone,—  
And I will free thee evermore  
From all thy sins ;—do not grieve."*

(XVIII-66)

# ESSENTIALS OF THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

## CHAPTER I.

*Historical Background—The Story of the Epic, 'Mahabharata.*

*The Scene of the Epic.*—Mahābhārata is the ancient kingdom of the Kurus which flourished along the upper course of the Ganga, the river Ganges, and the historical fact on which the epic is based is a great war which took place between the Kurus and the neighbouring tribe, the Pāñchālas \* in the XIII or XIV Century before Christ.

According to the Epic, Pāṇḍu and Dhṛita-rāṣṭra, who was born blind, were brothers. Pāṇḍu, the younger ruled the kingdom as Dhṛita-rāṣṭra, though the elder, was, according to the Sanātana Dharma Rules, disqualified, by reason of blindness, to the throne.

Pāṇḍu, the ruling prince, accidentally killed a Brahmana and to atone for the sin thus incurred he retired to the forest with Mādrā Devi for *tapas*, where he died and Mādrā Devi committed *sahagaman* on his funeral pyre. And Dhṛita-rāṣṭra brought up the five sons of Pāṇḍu along with his own one hundred and one sons. Before Pāṇḍu came of age, Bhishma, uncle of Pāṇḍu and Dhṛita-rāṣṭra, was acting as the Regent, and he was affectionately called "Grand Sire" by the offsprings of both the brothers.

Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers, also known as Dharmaputra, was an embodiment of truth and piety; Bhima, the second, was a stalwart fighter, and Arjuna, the third son, distinguished himself above all the other princes in arms.

The two youngest, Nakula and Sahadeva, were twins born of Mādrā Devi by the Aświnī Devatās. When Yudhiṣṭhira came of age he was crowned Emperor.

Duryodhana was the eldest son of Dhṛita-raṣṭra and was jealous of his cousins, the sons of Pandu. A tournament—*astrā pradarshan*—was held and in the course of the day, a warrior named Karna, of unknown origin, appeared on the scene and proved himself a worthy rival of Arjuna. The rivalry between Karna and Arjuna is the leading thought of the epic, as the rivalry between Achilles and Hector is the leading thought of the Iliad.

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\* The ancient Panchala territory comprised the modern Agra and Gwalior. Drupada, father of Draupadi, was the Ruler of the Panchala Territory. Draupadi was therefore known as Panchali also.

It will be shown later that the sons of Pāṇḍu, as well as Karna, were, like the heroes of Homer, god-born chiefs, some god having inspired the birth of each.

The mutual jealousies of the princes increased from day to day, and when Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest of the princes and the eldest son of the late King Pandu, was recognised heir-apparent, the anger of Duryodhana knew no bounds. And they formed a dark scheme to kill the sons of Pandu.

*The Lākṣhāgṛha Tragedy.*—The sons of Pandu were induced with their mother to pay a visit to a distant town called Vāranāvata. A house has been built there for their residence, constructed of inflammatory materials. At the appointed time fire was to set to the house; but the five brothers and their mother escaped the conflagration through an underground passage, retired into forests, and lived in the disguise of Brahmans in a potter's house.

In course of time they heard of the approaching celebration of the marriage of Draupadī, princess of Pañchālā, an ancient Kingdom in the vicinity of modern Kanauj. All the monarchs of Northern India were invited, and the bride would choose her husband from among the assembled kings according to the ancient *swayamvara* custom. The five sons of Pāṇḍu decided to go and witness the ceremony.

And in the competition that followed,

“Godlike Arjun born of Indra, filled with  
Vishnu's matchless might,

Bent the wondrous bow of Drupad, fixed the  
shining darts aright,

Through the disc the shining arrows fly with  
strange and hissing sound.

Hit and pierced the distant target, bring  
it thundering on the ground!

Shouts of joy and loud applause did the  
mighty feat declare,

Heavenly blossoms soft descended, heavenly  
music thrilled the air.”

\* \* \* \*

“Like a queen the beauteous maiden smiled  
upon the archer brave,

Flung on him the bridal garland and the  
bridal robe she gave,

Arjun by his skill and prowess won Panchala's princess-bride,

People's shouts and Brahmanas' blessings,  
sounded joyful far and wide."

A curious incident followed the bridal of Draupadi. The five Pāṇḍava brothers returned with her to the potter's house, where they were living on alms according to the custom of Brāhmaṇas, and the brothers reported to their mother that they had received a precious gift that day. "Enjoy ye the gift in common" replied their mother, not knowing what it was. And as a mother's mandate cannot be disregarded, Draupadi became the common wife of the five brothers.

The real significance of this strange legend, says Romesh Dutt, is unknown. The custom of brothers marrying a common wife prevails, he says, to this day in Tibet and among the hill-tribes of the Himālayas, but it never prevailed among the Aryan Hindus in India. It is distinctly prohibited in their laws and institutes, and finds no sanction in their literature, ancient or modern. The legend in the Mahābhārata, of brothers marrying a wife in common stands alone and without a parallel to Hindu traditions and literature.

Judging from the main incidents of the Epic, Draupadi might rather be regarded as the wife of the eldest brother, Yudhiṣṭhira. Bhīma had already mated himself to a female demon by name Hidimbā in a forest and had a son, Ghaṭotkaca by her. This son distinguished himself in the great war later on. He was on the side of the Pāṇḍavas; with an army of demons he did great havoc during the nocturnal fight and was killed by Karna with his "Śakti" missile.

Arjun too married Kṛṣṇa's sister, Subhadra and had by her a son, Abhimanyu, who was one of the heroes of the war. On the other hand, Yudhiṣṭhira took to himself no wife save Draupadi, and she was crowned with Yudhiṣṭhira in the Rājāsuya Yaga, the Imperial Sacrifice. Notwithstanding the legend, therefore, Draupadi might be regarded as wedded to Yudhiṣṭhira though won by the skill of Arjun, and this assumption would be in keeping with Hindu customs and laws, ancient and modern.

The jealous Duryodhana heard that his contrivance to kill his cousins at Vārāṇas had failed. He also came to know that they had found a powerful friend in Drupada, and had formed an alliance with him. It was no longer possible to keep them from their rightful inheritance. The Kuru kingdom was accordingly parcelled; Duryodhana retained the eastern and richer portion

with its ancient capital Hastinapura on the Ganges, and the sons of Pandu were given the western portion on the Jumna, which was then a forest and a wilderness. The sons of Pāṇḍu cleared the forest and built a new capital, Indraprastha, the supposed ruins of which, near modern Delhi, are still pointed out to the curious traveller.

Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas, and now King of Indraprastha, resolved to perform the Rājasūya Sacrifice, which was a formal assumption of the Imperial title over all the Kings of ancient India. His brothers were out with troops in all directions to proclaim his supremacy over all surrounding kings. Jarasandha, the powerful and semi-civilised king of Magadha (South Behar), opposed and was killed; but other monarchs recognised the supremacy of Yudhisthira and came to the sacrifice with tributes. King Dhṛta-rastra and his sons, now reigning at Hastinapura, were politely invited to take a share in the performance of the sacrifice.

The pomp and wealth of the Pāṇḍavas displayed during the performance of the Rājasūya-yāga (The Imperial Sacrifice) aroused deep jealousy in the mind of Duryodhana, and he devised plans to effect King Yudhisthira's fall. Sakuni, Prince of Gāndhara and maternal uncle of Duryodhana, shared the latter's hatred towards the sons of Pandu and helped him in his dark scheme.

He was the evil genius of the Kauravas, and *Shakunimāma* has been a bi-word in all the South Indian languages for an "evil-adviser."

*The fatal dice (Dyūta).*—Yudhiṣṭhira with all his piety and righteousness had one weakness—the love of gambling, which was one of the most tempting sins of the monarchs of the day. Sakuni was an expert at false dice (कपटद्यूत) and challenged Yudhisthira and the latter held it a point of honour not to decline such a challenge. He came from his new capital Indraprastha to Hastinapura, the capital of Duryodhana, with his mother Kunthi and brothers and Draupadi.

And as Yudhiṣṭhira lost game after game, he was stung with his losses, and with the recklessness of a gambler, still went on with the fatal game. His wealth and hoarded gold and jewels, his steeds, elephants and cars, his slaves, male and female, his empire and possessions were all staked and lost.

The madness increased, and Yudhiṣṭhira staked his brothers and then himself, and then the fair Draupadi, and lost! And the Emperor of Indraprastha and family were deprived of every possession on Earth, and became the bond-slaves of Duryodhana. The blind King Dhṛta-rashtra, father of Duryodhana and elder brother

of Pandu, however, released them from actual slavery. In this connection must be mentioned the name of Vikarna, the only righteous of the one hundred and one sons of Dhṛta-rāṣṭra, who boldly voiced forth his view at the end of the game of dice that Draupadi has *not* been made a slave. (*Vide* Draupadi's Mānabhaṅga episode—Chapter VIII).

Finally, it was settled that Yudhisthira and the brothers together with their crowned Queen, Draupadi should repair to the forest and live there in exile—*Vanavāsa*—for 12 years, after which for one year they were to remain *incognito*—*Ajñātavāsa*—untraced by the Kauravas. All these 13 years the Kingdom was to be ruled by Duryodhana, and if the Pāṇḍavas remained undetected during the stipulated period of one year's *incognito* existence, the kingdom was to be restored to them after the conclusion of the period.

*During the exile.*—Many were the incidents that checkered their forest life. Sree Kṛṣṇa, who has stood by the Pāṇḍavas in their prosperity now came to visit them in their adversity. He consoled Draupadi in her distress and gave good advice to the brothers. She with a woman's pride and anger still thought of the wrongs and insults done to her by Duryodhana, and urged Yudhisthira to disregard the terms of the exile and recover his kingdom. Bhima too was of the same mind, but Yudhisthira would not be moved from his plighted word.

The great Vedavyāsa, the Author of the Mahābharatā, and the Bhārata-Pitāmaha (the common ancestor of the Pandavas and the Kauravas) came to visit Yudhisthira and advised Arjuna, great archer as he was, to acquire celestial weapons of war by penance and worship. Arjuna followed the advice, met God Shiva in the guise of a hunter, pleased Him by his prowess in combat, and obtained with his blessings the Pāshupatāstra (the weapon of Pashupati, God Shiva). Arjuna next went to Amarāvathi, the Heaven of Devendra (who was Arjuna's father by *Inspiration*) and obtained from him other Celestial Weapons.

Duryodhana not content with sending the Pandavas to exile, wished to humiliate them still more by appearing before them in all his regal pomp and splendour. Matters, however, turned out differently from what he expected, and he became involved in a quarrel with the Gandharva Chief, Chitrasena, and his retinue. Duryodhana was taken a captive, and it was Arjuna who released him with the use of his Pāshupatāstra, and allowed him to return to his kingdom in peace. This act of generosity rankled in Duryodhana's bosom and deepened his hatred.

Jayadratha, King of the Sindhus (Indus Valley) and husband of Duśśalā, the only sister of Duryodhana, and an ally of the latter came to the woods, and in the absence of the Pandava Bro-



thers, carried off Draupadi. They, however, pursued him, chastised him for his misconduct and brought back Draupadi.

Still more interesting than these various incidents are the tales and legends with which the Mahābhārata and the Ramayana are replete. Great Saints came to see Yudhishthira in his exile, and narrated to him legends of ancient times and of former kings. One of these beautiful episodes, the Story of Nala and Damayanti has been translated into graceful English verse by Dean Milman and is known to many English readers.

The legend of Agastya who drained the ocean dry; of Paraśhūrāma, a Brahmin who killed the Kṣatriyas of the earth; of Bhagiratha who brought down the Ganga from the skies to the earth; of Manu and the Universal Deluge (Mahāpralaya); of Vishnu and various other gods,—these and various other legends have been woven in the account of the forest-life of the Pāṇḍavas and make it a veritable store-house of ancient Hindu Tales and Traditions.

*On return from the exile.*—Having successfully concluded their exile of 13 years according to the terms, when the Pāṇḍavas at last asked for the return of their kingdom, Duryodhana, gave a flat refusal. The learned and aged family Priest of Drupada, King of the Panchalas (and father of Draupadi who is on this account named, Pāṇchālī), was sent to Duryodhana's Court to negotiate in favour of the Pāṇḍavas, but Duryodhana remained adamant. Thereafter both the sides began to prepare themselves for war, the War of Liberation.

Duryodhana went to Dwaraka to invite Sree Kṛṣṇa to join him as an ally. Arjuna also reached there the same time. They both found Sree Kṛṣṇa resting on a couch in His palace. Observing that Sree Kṛṣṇa was asleep, Duryodhana went in and occupied a nice and comfortable seat at the head of the couch, while Arjuna remained standing with folded hands in a posture of humility at the foot of the couch. The moment Sree Kṛṣṇa opened His eyes He saw Arjuna standing before Him, and then, when He turned his head, He could see Duryodhana seated in the chair at the head of the couch. Sree Kṛṣṇa welcomed both and asked for the reason of their visit. In reply Duryodhana said: "Your love and affection for me as well as Arjuna are quite balanced, and both of us are your relations; but I was the first to approach you. The Code of Honour amongst honourable men demands that help should be rendered to the first seeker of help. You are the greatest and most honoured person in the World to-day; therefore, you should render help to me alone." The Lord said: "I agree that you were the first to come here, but my eyes fell on Arjuna first. Therefore I shall help both of you.

According to the Rules of *dharma* the privilege of first choice should be given to the younger in age, therefore Arjuna's desire should be satisfied first. My help will be available in this war in two ways; one side will have my most powerful Narayance-Sena and on the other I shall remain Myself, single-handed, bound by the vow of not participating in battle and not taking up arms. Now Arjuna, as Rules of *dharma* dictate, I give you the first choice to express your desire; please take out of these two offers whichever you prefer." Arjuna thereupon chose Bhagavan Sree Kṛṣṇa, the Slayer of Foes, and a manifestation of God Narayana Himself, as his helper: Duryodhan for his part took the powerful Narayance-Sena as his share and returned to Hastinapura very much delighted at heart.

When Sree Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna why he gave up preference for the Narayance-Sena and took Him on his side, Arjuna replied: "Lord! You are capable of destroying all these forces single-handed, why should I, then, care for the army? Besides, I have long cherished the desire in my heart that you should act as my *sārathi*. Kindly fulfil that desire during the war." The Lord, who is ever the most devoted lover of His devotees accepted with pleasure, this role of driving the horses of Arjuna's chariot as desired by Arjuna.

That is how Sree Kṛṣṇa became the charioteer of Arjuna, and at the commencement of the battle of Kurukshetra delivered to Arjuna the Divine Teachings as incorporated in the Bhagavad-Gītā.

On the return of Duryodhana and Arjuna from Dwaraka when the armies of both sides had assembled, Sree Kṛṣṇa Himself went to Hastinapura as the emissary of the Pandavas, and tried to prevail upon Duryodhana to prevent the war, but Duryodhana declared in clear and explicit terms, "so long as I am alive, the Pandavas can never expect to have the kingdom; I am not prepared to give them even so much land as could be covered by the point of a needle." It is only then that according to the advice of their mother Kunthi, and under the inspiration of Sree Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍavas finally decided to involve themselves in War, considering their cause to be righteous, and establish by force of arms their rightful claim to the kingdom.

All negotiations for a peaceful restoration of their kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas having failed, both parties now prepared for war, perhaps the most sanguinary that was ever fought on the plains of Bhāratavarṣa (India) in the ancient times. It was a battle of nations, for all the war-like races of Northern India took part in it.

When the war was about to start, the sage Vedāvyāsa, the Bhāratha Piṭṛmaha, approached Dhṛiṣṭa-rasṭra, the blind king, and

said: "If you want to see this terrible carnage with your own eyes, I can make you a gift of *divyadr̥ṣṭi* "Transcendental vision." But Dhṛṭa-raṣṭra replied: "O Chief of Brahmar̥ṣis, I have no desire to see with my own eyes the slaughter of my own people, but I should like to hear all the details of the battle." Thereupon the great sage conferred the gift on Sañjaya,\* Dhṛṭa-raṣṭra's trusty counsellor, and said to Dhṛṭa-raṣṭra: "Sañjaya will describe to you all the incidents of the war. Whatever happens in the course of this war he will directly see, hear and otherwise come to know, whether an incident takes place before his eyes or behind his back, during day time or at night, privately or in public, and whether it is reduced to actual action or appears only as a thought, it will not remain hidden from his view. He will come to know everything exactly as it happens. No weapon will touch his body, nor will he feel the least fatigue."

"What is taking place is inevitable, there is no power on Earth capable of arresting the course of this catastrophe, it will end in the triumph of Righteousness (*Dharma*) and Virtue (*Satya*)" he added:

यदभावं न तद्भाव्यम्  
भावं चेत् न तदन्यथा ।

"Whatever should not happen will not happen ;  
Whatever should happen will not be otherwise."

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\* The word "Sañjaya" means in Sanskrit "one who has conquered wrath or anger. Sañjaya is a Sūta (story-teller) by caste. He becomes the War-correspondent of Dhṛitarāṣṭra and had not taken any active part in the war. But after Duryodhana's fall Sañjaya was made a war-prisoner by Sityaki, a Yadava Chief, a comrade of Śrī Krishna; he fought on the side of the Pāndavas. Sityaki's another name is Yuyudhana. (*Gita*, I-4)

*The Kurukṣhetra Battle (The Great Mahābhārata War)*

The term "Kurukṣhetra" literally means the field of Kuru, and the word "Kuru" is the imperative form of *Kri* which means "to do, to act," and "Kurukṣhetra" therefore means "the field of imperative Action."

Kurukṣhetra is also described elsewhere in the Mahābhārata Epic as Tapah-kṣhetra, or Dharmakṣhetra (Holy place). It is situated between the Jumna and the now dried up river Sarasvatī of ancient fame, and forms a portion of that part of the Āryāvartā called by Manu as Brahmarṣhi-Desha. It is called a Holy place for the reason that Brahmanical life of exemplary righteousness was being lived there from the ancient times.

*Note.*—The word "Dharma" is used in several senses in the Gītā, such as Duty, obligatory rites, righteousness, Rules of Ethics and righteous conduct, religion, and justice. The earthly ideal of Dharma includes *Loka-saṅgraha* or the welfare of the world and of the living creatures. With a capital "D" "Dharma" is the name of Yudhiṣṭira, also called "Dharma-putra," being an embodiment of Truth and piety. "Dharmaputra" also means, "Son of Yamadharma," the father by inspiration of Yudhiṣṭira.

The Kurukṣetra-battle is compared by the Poet to a River—the Rana-nadee—thus: "the river in the shape of the great war with the Kauravas (which the Pāṇḍavas had to cross in order to regain their lost kingdom) had the invincible warriors Grand-Sire Bhishma and Preceptor Drona for its inaccessible banks; Jayadratha formed the stream of water flowing in the river; Sakuni, the Prince of Gāndhāra (modern Kandahar) and maternal uncle of the Kaurava brothers, was a massive boulder standing in the middle of the current. Salva the king of the Mādrās (and maternal uncle of the twin brothers, Nakula and Sahadeva) stood as a huge allegator, and Kripacharya represented the main current, while Karna formed its high waves; Ashwatthama (son of Preceptor Dronāchārya) and Vikarṇa (the only righteous of the Kaurava brothers) were two terrible crocodiles in it, while Duryodhana represented a large and treacherous whirlpool. Verily, the Pāṇḍavas succeeded in crossing this fearful battle-river (Rana-nadee with the help of Bhagavan Sree Kṛṣṇa as their Helmsman (*Karnadīparah*) and Ferriman (*Kaīartakah*)."

भीष्मद्रोणतटा जयद्रथजला गान्धारनीलोत्पला

शल्यमाहवती कृपेण वहनी कर्णेन वेलाकुला ।

अश्वत्थामविकर्णघोरमकरा दुर्योधनायर्तिनी

सोत्तीर्णा खलु पाण्डवै रणनदी कैवर्तके वेशवे ॥

नीलोत्पला is also translated as the blue-lotus, which form a net work in the stream below the surface.

• On the holy grounds of the Kurukṣhetra, consecrated by the sacrifice and penance of Sree Paraśurāma, the Pāṇḍava and the Kaurava armies stood arrayed in battle. All the kings of India were on either side, except Rukmi, whose aid was rejected by both sides owing to his arrogant claim that he could gain victory single-handed. Balarama (elder brother of Sree Kṛṣṇa) who had refused to fight on either side, this being a fratricidal war, and the Chera King, who had chosen to feed the hungry soldiers and look to their comforts in the intervals of the fight "irrespective of the side to which they belonged."

Arjuna, the Pāṇḍava Hero, was in his magnificent chariot drawn by spotlessly white steeds with Sree Kṛṣṇa as his *Sarathi*, *Charioteer*. He was the hope of the Pāṇḍavas and was in very high spirits remembering the words of his mother Kunthi, conveyed to him by Sree Kṛṣṇa, that "a celestial voice had proclaimed at the time of Arjuna's birth, that he was born to do super-human deeds of courage in this World."

Yudhisthira (also known as Dharma or the Embodiment of Righteousness) on the other hand, was dejected on seeing the two armies ready to engage in a fratricidal strife. Arjuna got down from his chariot and approaching the brother said: "Why are you dejected, Brother? Where there is *Dharma* (righteousness or justice) there is victory, where there is Kṛṣṇa there is victory" say the great ones, Nārada, and Kaṇwa, Bhīṣhma and Droṇa, Gāndhāri and Kunthi alike. So cast off this dejection and fight without egoism or selfishness like a true Kṣhatriya prince, as our mother has told us to do."

At the bidding of Sree Kṛṣṇa Arjuna next prays to Goddess Durgā (Māhākālī).

O Brahmanvidyā among the Vidyās,

O Mother of the Vedas, O Goddess enshrined in  
our hearts, give us courage and victory  
in this terrible battle !

The Goddess, Arjuna felt, blessed him and smilingly said:

यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ।

यतः कृष्णस्ततो जयः ।

meaning :

'Where *dharma* is there is Victory  
Where Sree Kṛṣṇa is there is Victory.'

Arjuna got into his chariot in a contemplative mood.

When the two armies that were drawn up in array faced each other and Arjuna saw his revered elders and dear friends and relations among the foes, he was *unwilling to fight*. \*It was on this occasion that Sree Kṛṣṇa explained to him the great principles of duty in that memorable work, the Bhagavad Gītā. Belief in one Supreme Deity is the underlying thought of this work, and ever and anon does Sree Kṛṣṇa revert to the doctrine that "for every man no matter to which religion he belongs, the zealous performance of his duty and the discharge of his obligations is his most important work". And the context in which the Gita is said to be delivered, points out how the central purpose of the Gita is to solve the problems of life and to stimulate right conduct.

*Arjuna's Despondency.*—Arjuna comes to the battlefield, convinced of his cause and is prepared to fight the enemy, but at the psychological moment he shrinks from his duty. His conscience is troubled, his heart is torn with anguish and his state of mind suffers then "the nature of an insurrection." If to slay is sin, it must be worse sin to slay those to whom we owe our love and respect.

Arjuna typifies the struggling individual who feels the burden and the mystery of the world. He has not yet built within himself a strong centre of spirit from which he can know not only the unreality of his desires and passions, but also the true status of the world opposing him.

Arjuna's despondency is "not the passing mood of a disappointed man, but is the feeling of a void, a sort of deadness felt in the heart, exciting a sense of the unreality of things." (Vide Appendix I also).

Arjuna is ready to repudiate or reject his life if necessary. He does not, however, know what is right for him to do. He is faced by a terrible temptation and passes through an intense inward agony.

His cry is a simple yet tremendous one, significant of the tragedy of man, which all who can see beyond the actual drama of the hour can recognise. (Chief Ref: Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: B. B. Gl. Sept. 26, 1959, page 26).

\* Vide 'Arjuna's Despondency'—which immediately follows.

## The Method of the Gita \*

The method of instruction adopted by Sree Kṛṣṇa in teaching Arjuna is unique. Right at the beginning Sree Kṛṣṇa appears as a mere charioteer of Arjuna, who was known to be the greatest warrior among the Kṣhatriyas of those times. But when Arjuna gets nervous at the impending slaughter of his own kinsmen by himself, Sree Kṛṣṇa undertakes to prop him up by appealing to his Duties as a Kṣhatriya.

On the failure of that appeal and on realising that the malady of Arjuna is deeper He unfolds the philosophy of detached, yet dedicated, action and Duty. But when He sees that that kind of dry philosophy also is not enough to save Arjuna from the fatal collapse, He rises to His full height and impresses him with the Gospel of the Spirit-Immanent, which He asserts is, in fact, doing everything. He knocks the bottom of the individual ego of Arjuna and overwhelms him with the idea that he is but an *instrument* in the hands of the Spirit and that his personality has existence only as a canalised manifestation, as a wave on the bosom of the ocean of the Supreme Person—the Purushottama.

It is here, says Diwakar \*that Sree Kṛṣṇa far surpasses and supersedes the mere role of an adviser or preacher. He offers to Arjuna the Vision of the Godhead and appears himself as the Godhead entirely transcending the role of a charioteer; He experiences in his own Consciousness, in fact, He realises the complete merger of his own personality into the Spirit—Immanent, permanently pervading the Universe. This happens to such an intense degree that He is able to convey the realisation to Arjuna and to transfer to him "the Vision Magnificent."

It is no wonder that at this stage Arjuna is transformed from a doubting and vacillating piteous figure, to which he had been reduced, to his former stature of the greatest archer in the World and the hero of Kurukshetra.

"It is this phenomenon," continues Diwakar, namely, the rise of the consciousness of Sree Kṛṣṇa to cosmic heights, the tapering off of His personality into the Supreme Person, the complete suffusion of His Consciousness with full God-realisation His merger into the Divine Consciousness to the exclusion of the

\* R. R. Diwakar - "Thoughts and Reflections"—Bhavan's Journal, 28-7-1957.

Consciousness of His own Self that are highly significant. The power that Sree Kṛṣṇa seems to have attained at this stage, the capacity to make Arjuna feel the impact of the Divine, and to give him Darshan (direct vision) of the *Virāt Puruṣa* is highly remarkable and worthy of far deeper study. It is something more than *Savikalpa* or *Nirvikalpa samādhi*. It is something akin to but far greater than what Sree Ramakrishna Paramahansa is said to have done in the case of Swami Vivekānanda while giving the latter by a simple touch a glimpse of *samādhi* ecstasy. This is the realisation *in excelsis* by human consciousness of the Being—Becoming dyad of Reality!

“ So far as my knowledge goes,” adds Diwaker, “ no faith in the world and no religion lays store by a direct revelation by the Godhead. Often it is the Prophet, the Messenger, the poet, that conveys to mortals “ the Word of God.” This conception of Godhead itself delivering the message in the first person seems something very bold and unique.”

*Arjuna's Prayer to the Lord on seeing His Vishwarupa.*

त्वमादिदेवः पुरुषः पुराणः

त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ॥

वेत्तासि वेद्यं परमं च धाम

त्वया ततं विश्वमनन्तरूप ॥

(Gita, xi 38)

“ Primeval Deva, the Ancient Man art Thou,—

And Thou the Refuge of the World Supreme,

And Known Thou, and Knower,—the Highest Goal,

Of infinite form, filling the Universe.”

(Gita, xi 38)

पितासि लोकस्य चराचरस्य

त्वमस्य पूज्यश्च गुरुर्गरीयान् ।

न त्वत्समोऽस्ति अभ्यधिकः कुतोऽन्यो

लोकत्रयेऽपि अमतिमप्रभायः ॥

(Gita, xi 43)

“ Thou Sire of all that moves or does not move,—

Worthy of worship, greater than the great:

Thou hast no equal in the three-fold world,—

Who can excel Thee, O Thou matchless One ! ”

(Gita, xi 43)



तस्मात् प्रणम्य प्रणिधाय कायम्  
प्रसादये त्वामहमीशमोक्ष्यम् ।

पितेव पुत्रस्य सखेव सख्युः

प्रियः प्रियायार्हसि देव सोढुम् ॥

(Gita, xi 44)

“My body thus before Thee I prostrate,  
And crave forgiveness, O Thou Lord Supreme!  
As father with son, as friend with friend,  
As a lover with his beloved, so bear with me.”

(Gita, xi 44)

At this The Lord said :

मया प्रसन्नेन तच्चाक्षुर्नेदं  
रूपं परं दर्शितमात्मयोगात् ।

तेजोमयं विश्वमनन्तमाद्यम्

यन्मे त्वदन्येन न दृष्टपूर्वम् ॥

(Gita, xi 47)

“Through my favour, Arjuna, have I shown,  
By power of Yoga, this glorious form Supreme,  
Primeval, Universal, Infinite,—  
Which none but thee hath ever seen before.”

(Gita, xi 47)

Having thus spoken to Arjuna, Vasudeva again showed him His own form and consoled him, the frightened one, the Great Soul assuming a gentle form.

It must be pointed out here, that the first occasion on which Sree Kṛṣṇa of Dwaraka showed His Vishwarupa, though in a much simpler and milder form, was when He was a child. He once put some earth in the mouth. Yesoda, His foster-mother, asked Him to open the mouth, and when He did, she saw the sun, the moon, the stars, the *Earth* with all its mountains, seas, rivers and trees and living beings inside the *baby-mouth*, and stood flabber-gasted. The Lord then saw that she would go mad if He continued to show the cosmic form, and so He reassumed the form of a small child with the earth in its mouth. And Yesoda recovered herself, made him spit out the earth, gave him a spanking and asked him not to do so again.

On Maharshi Vedavyasa's departure from Dhṛṭa-rastra's Court, Sañjaya in answer to Dhṛṭa-rastra's query described to him the location of the different divisions (*dweepas*) of the terrestrial World, in the course of which he gave a geographical description of Bharata-varsha (India) as well. In the meantime the struggle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas started and continued for 10 days, when Bhishma, the Grand Sire, was thrown down from his chariot and lay on his "bed of arrows" (शरत्स्य) awaiting the setting in of Uttarāyana, as he was an *ichchāmriti* and could "die at will."

At this point Sanjaya again goes to Dhṛṭa-rastra and suddenly announces to him Bhishma's fall in battle. Terribly moved at the sad news Dhṛṭa-rastra requested Sañjaya to describe to him all the incidents of the battle from the beginning, and Sañjaya thereupon gave a detailed description of the formation of the two rival armies. And Dhṛṭa-rastra again asked Sañjaya to describe to him in greater detail all the incidents that had taken place till then.

Here commences the First Chapter of the Gita with Dhṛṭa-rastra's interrogation to Sañjaya in the following terms:—

"In Kurukshetra, Dharma's field,  
Assembled, eager for the fight,  
My sons and sons of Pāṇdu all,  
What did they do, O Sañjaya?" (Gita, 1—1.)

The First Chapter of the Gītā is termed "Arjuna Vishada-yoga"—The despondency of Arjuna, but the first verse of the first chapter expresses rather the anxiety of Dhṛṭa-rastra as to what happened on the Kurukshetra battle-field where his own sons, the Kauravas, and the Pandavas met in War. Hence this incomparable treatise, the Gītā, may be said to open with a note as to the anxiety of Dhṛṭa-rastra (which word means "the usurper or possessor of a usurped kingdom.")

Dhṛṭa-rastra was a well-known Bharata king and has to play a special part in the war. He was born blind and was the elder brother of Pandu, the father of the Pāṇḍavas. He is one who has usurped the Kingdom of the Pandavas, that is to say, he has held sway by means of brute force over a kingdom belonging to others, namely, the Pāṇḍavas, and which is not his right. Moreover, his son, Duryodhan, has refused, we have seen, to hand over the kingdom to its rightful owner, the Pāṇḍavas, when the latter demanded its restitution. Dhṛṭa-rastra is therefore feeling particularly anxious about the war of liberation conducted by the rightful

owners, the Pāṇḍavas. So he asks Sañjaya, "Tell me what really happened on the field of battle."

*The Possessor and the Dispossessed.*—The war is waged between those who have usurped the kingdom (*dhrtarastras* or the possessors) and those who are deprived of it (*hrtarastras*, the dispossessed), and wars are usually waged between such parties. The Kauravas (the one hundred and one sons of Dhṛta-rastra) headed by Duryodhana were the followers of the party of the Possessors, and the party of the Pandavas was that of the Dispossessed, as the latter's kingdom was taken away by the former by force and stratagem; and these latter are now trying to get back their lost kingdom. As their kingdom has been taken away and they have been reduced to the lowest point of degradation, and as there is no likelihood of further loss to the dispossessed even if they should meet with defeat in war, the dispossessed are not usually very much overcome with anxiety even while they are making preparations for war diligently. The dispossessed have a hope that if the result of the war should be favourable to them, they would certainly get back their lost kingdom. But if they should be defeated there is no chance of a further loss, since they had already been deprived of their entire possessions.

“गुह्येणे गुह्ये अह इदितु, आदरे  
खोवियेळगे खोवि एतिरंदु”

The Proverb says :

“There may be hills over hills, but there may not be wells inside wells. For this reason anxiety cannot cause perceptible pain to them, nay, on account of their party being on the side of justice (*dharma*) and on account of there being an even chance of their kingdom being restored, an unprecedented enthusiasm reigns in their hearts. Such is not the case with the possessors, the party of Dhṛta-rastra. If they win a victory they do not stand to gain anything more, and whatever they possessed before the war is the maximum they would retain permanently. On the contrary, in case of defeat the kingdom which they have taken from another by unlawful and unjust means, by cruel deeds, inordinate acts of oppression and innumerable sins, will escape from their hands for ever. It is thus possible that they sustain a very great loss from war. Hence the people on the side of the possessors are full of anxiety day and night burning in their hearts. Even if they gain victory they are decidedly losers; but if they sustain a defeat in war they suffer unbounded loss; thus in either case their lot is certain to be an object of censure in the eyes of the World. Dhṛta-rastra having thus been tortured with this anxiety is putting the

question—"What did really happen, O Sañjaya, when my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu assembled for war on the Holy Grounds of the Kurukshetra?"

We have indicated above the commotion produced in Dhrtārastra's mind by the fear implied in the above question. The fear is not trifling. All the suzerain powers usurping kingdoms are afflicted in their hearts day and night with this fear-complex. However imposing their outside pomp and splendour be, none else but they themselves can experience their inner disquiet.

*Dhrtā-rāṣṭra's blindness.*—Dhrtā-rāṣṭra was blind and was born so, moreover, there is reason for him for being so. A man usually becomes blind from pride of power and wealth (*madāṇḍāh*) solely by the animal strength he possesses; one who has the most of this strength becomes blind first and the quickest of all. It is on account of the surfeit of animal strength that he forcibly usurps another's kingdom and enjoys it, and consequently his wealth also increases enormously. A man becomes blind on account of excessive wealth and strength; that is to say, a person intoxicated by power, wealth and authority is unable to discriminate between what is just and unjust, between religion and irreligion, between sense of duty and failure to perform duty, between morality and immorality and between what is *dharma* and *adharma*. Whether he be blind by a fault in the physical eye, or his physical eye is quite normal, these have nothing to do with moral blindness. He has become blind from the point of view of Moral Reason. His physical and spiritual blindness is truly more terrible than the blindness due to faulty mechanism of the eyes. Not only does such blindness create anxiety in his mind, but it drowns every person who has joined his side in the bottomless sea of anxiety and misery.

*Blind followers of the Blind (Gatanugatigo) lokah.* \*—Dhrtārastra's wife, Gāndhārī, made herself blind also, although she had normal eyesight, as such was bound to be the condition of all who were the partisans of the blind Dhrtārastra. It is to be admitted that Gāndhārī had put on a veil over her face in order to observe the vow of a devoted and dutiful wife in the sense that because her husband cannot see the forms of objects in the outside world and derive pleasure therefrom, she too would not see these forms. This vow is undoubtedly extraordinary and is typical of the feminine race. The same Gāndhārī, however, was not powerful at the nick of time to protest against or prevent the violation of decorum including *vastrapaharan* prac-

\* *Gatanugatigo lokah na lokah paramārthikah*—"People commonly are blind followers of the blind, and rarely followers of the enlightened."

tised on her own daughter-in-law, Draupadi, who was in due form crowned Empress. It is true that Gandhārī faintly protested when the violation reached the acme, but if she had come forward at the right moment the violation would not perhaps have happened at all. From this it is clear that Gandhārī had no desire to run counter to the wishes of her husband, Dhṛtā-rāstra. If she had kept in check Duhshāsana by utmost exertion there was lot of chance of the reputation of the family being saved. Perhaps, we may suppose, she had put a veil on her eyes deliberately. This must have been in fact the case.

“And if the blind lead the blind,  
both fall into the ditch.”—Mathews. *New Testament*.

Dhṛtā-rāstra thought seriously that if the nuisance of the Pāṇḍavas was put an end to by hook or crook, and if his sons, the Kauravas, got suzerainty of the whole empire without a break and free from enemies, the Pāṇḍavas, it would be so nice. Gandhārī also seems to have entertained the same wish either because she was a loyal wife or on account of her affection for her sons. It is not possible for a loyal wife to go against the wishes of her husband. It is for this reason also very natural for women to display such weakness from an affection for their sons, or from a desire to act according to the wishes of their husbands. For like reasons women cannot, as a rule, dictate their wishes in an emphatic manner. They are thus compelled to remain “blind” even if they have sound eyes. Such was the predicament of Gandhārī. Even the sons of the blind Dhṛtā-rāstra were apt to follow the blind father, each surpassing the other in wickedness.

Duryodhan, Duhshāsana, Durdhar, and their only sister Duhshalā. All these names begin with the syllable *duh*, meaning in Sanskrit “wicked” or “*Āsuric*”. Although the meaning of these words is not expressive of a defect in point of valour or prowess, their prowess was undoubtedly misused on the whole, since it was used for wicked purposes. That energy which is employed for divine purpose is the best employed and is worthy of honour; but the prowess which is used for wicked (*Āsuric*) purposes and is conducive to the increase of discord in the world will, undoubtedly, augment the misery in the world, however incomparable the prowess might be. This fact becomes clear from the names of the sons and the only daughter of Dhṛtā-rāstra.

As the persons in the retinue of one who has usurped another's kingdom and his followers assist him in every way without offering the least opposition to him, they become partisans in all his sins. They cannot put their sins away from them. Duryodhan was really Suyodhan as he was really a “good fighter,” but since

he employed his skill in the art of war with a wicked motive he had become Duryodhan in spite of being Suyodhan.

*Corporate sin.*—The same was the predicament of Grand Sire Bhishma, and Preceptors Drona and Kripa. Really speaking these were knowers of dharma, were great warriors, were capable of achieving the highest ideals of man, were full of lustre and were inclined towards righteousness; nay, they were extraordinary persons, worthy of homage (*poojārhow*), worthy of being remembered morning and evening and worthy of emulation. But their prowess was spent in fighting for an unjust cause of the wicked sons of Dhrtā-rāstra. In spite of their being such ideal characters they were regarded as worthy of being killed by throwing their lot with an unjust and unrighteous cause. Such is the terrible consequence of a corporate sin! In such a war the good also come to be destroyed along with the evil. No one can save the good people who are killed in a war set on foot under such leadership. For this reason even the Divine Sree Krishna could not save the good and great souls like Bhishma, Drona and Kripa, although he was adequately conscious of their worth. Verily, they very well knew that the cause of the Pāṇḍavas was the righteous one, and that of Dhrtā-rāstra was unrighteous. Their firm wish was that the kingdom of the Pāṇḍavas should be restored to them as early as possible. They also knew that Dhrtā-rāstra and his circle of miscreants hanging on Duryodhan were frequently putting obstacles in the way of restoration of the kingdom to the Pandavas, and that this was a great unfairness; from time to time they have given utterance to this feeling and advised Dhrtā-rāstra and others to that effect. But the insolent partisans of the "Imperialist Party" of Dhrtā-rāstra were not inclined to listen to their advice. And Duryodhan too did not attach much importance to their opinion. Who would listen to the prattle of the blind old man?

Insolent officers of a State and despotic Princes ruling over a State are never prepared to listen to sound advice and to the counsels of religion, and will never do so in time. It is only when they are completely defeated that they are prone to listen to religious truths. But what possibly is the use of this mood at that late hour?

Bhishma, the Grand Sire, was the Regent of Duryodhan, and when war was declared he was made the Commander-in-Chief; Preceptors Drona and Kripa and Karna also bound themselves to serve King Duryodhan. "Obedience to the authority which maintains order even though that authority rests on morally unsound or imperfectly justifiable foundations is under all ordinary circumstances a duty (*dharma*), and when one has taken service

voluntarily under such authority, one's obligation to obey it ungrudgingly becomes "doubly binding." (Satvalekar).\*

"The wages of sin is death," says Duryodhan:

"We have an army of eleven *akshohinis*, which is thoroughly prepared for war, and which have gone through the experience of war. Great warriors like Bhishma, and Preceptors Drona and Kripa, and Karna, who have never been check-mated by any one, are my helpers; all sorts of weapons and missiles are in perfect readiness, and the treasury is full of riches. Thus equipped, why on earth should we give up the kingdom which we have secured, being frightened by the insignificant agitation for the restoration of the kingdom started by the Pandavas? The army of the Pandavas is small, it has not got much experience of war, they have not as much money as we have, the strength of the Pandavas is inferior to ours, in every respect. Why then should we be afraid of them?"

Looking at the strength or weakness alone from the point of war, this discourse of Duryodhan was true, but he did not know that the warriors on his side had been practically dead. Says Sree Kṛṣṇa:

तस्मात् उत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व

जित्वा शत्रून् मुहुर्द्व राज्यं समृद्धम् ।

मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव

निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ॥

(Gita xi 33)

"Therefore arise, and win thou great renown ;

Conquer thy foes, enjoy the affluent kingdom !

By Me already all these have been slain,—

Be thou only the *instrument*, Arjuna." (Gita xi 33)

*Note.*—"Instrument" means an "apparent cause". "Man is merely a channel through which God's Power flows."

"The Laws of Nature are the Will of God. His Will is manifested in the shape of what we see directly or by investigation, but which we choose to call the Laws of Nature. God is the Law and the Law is God. He rules through the Law, and it seems as if the Law rules and not He." (C. Rajagopalachari.)

On account of their numerous sins and unjust acts Duryodhan with sound eyes had become quite blind so far as the perception of this fact is concerned. He did not notice the fact

\* The Bhagavat Gita, explaining the object of Life—Aundh:—

that on account of his numerous sins all his subjects and majority of his officers and soldiers had their sympathies turned towards the Pāṇḍavas. "They alone to whom people wish Victory really obtain it!" This was the Blessing of Lord Mahādeva received by the Pāṇḍavas before the war started.

Duryodhan had not taken notice of the moral strength of the Pāṇḍavas, who were making efforts in order to get back their lost kingdom. He was only counting on the physical strength of his own side and he had become inordinately intoxicated (*madāndah*) with his incomparable brute strength; but the blind Dhṛta-raṣṭra's conscience was pricked day and night by this fear-complex. Although blind he was more conscious of his sins. For this very reason, as soon as the time of war approached he was most oppressed by fear, and this fear began to pierce his vitals like an arrow-head, and so he addresses Sañjaya as to "what happened on the battle field." Dhṛta-raṣṭra thinking that it would be good if the Pāṇḍavas turned from war now that they had entered a holy place (*dharma-kshetra*, the holy Kurukshetra) is watching the effect of the holiness of the battle-field on the simple conscience of the Pāṇḍavas, and he was still thinking that the effect of the holy place would be in his favour in spite of his commission of so much of sin. The adage—"the biased mind is blind and mad"—is very true indeed!

*The fear of his own sins—Dhṛta-raṣṭra's Soliloquy.*—While putting the above question all the sins that Dhṛta-raṣṭra had committed must have been before his mind's eye, and he must have been saying as in a soliloquy: "We put poison in the cup of Bhīma, we tried to drown him in water, and to burn all the Pāṇḍavas in the 'lakshā-griha' (house built of inflammable material), we disgraced Draupadi, the chaste wife of the Pāṇḍavas by trying to denude her in the Assembly hall, and by fraudulent gambling (*कपटव्यूत*). We inflicted on them all miseries of a twelve-years' exile in the forest and living for one year *incognito* (*ājñatavāsa*). They bore all these miseries patiently by keeping within the bounds of law. They did not commit acts of violence though they had the power to do, but remained non-violent. They are asking for the restoration of their kingdom after observing all the terms of the contract, while we are refusing it on some excuse or other. We proclaimed several times that we would restore their kingdom back, but we did not do so actually, but simply postponed the evil day. In spite of so many atrocities and deceitful acts on our part, the Pāṇḍavas asked only five villages, one for each brother, and we were adamant in refusing to them even so much of land as "could be covered by a needle-point" without fighting. All these wicked deeds were perpetrated by us. On account of these numerous sin the minds



of the people are favourably inclined towards the Pāṇḍavas and antipathetic towards us. For this reason, although our side is superior in brute strength, it has become very feeble on the score of spiritual strength, while the side of the Pāṇḍavas on account of their association with Dharma and Satya has become many times superior on the score of soul-force."

Such was the anxiety of Dhṛta-raṣṭra. By its influence he was burning day and night, and for this very reason he is questioning Sanjaya with eagerness as soon as war began, "what actually happened in the battle between my sons and the Pāṇḍavas on the holy field of Kurukshetra?"

*Misuse of Religious Injunctions.*—People who take possession of others' kingdom by unjust means and attempt to make stable their authority over others' territory by deceit are always trying to show that the teachings of the sacred laws are favourable to their conduct. To awaken the false sentiment of religion opposed to war among the conquered, to instil into their minds the idea of cosmopolitan interests, to dissuade them from war by pointing out to them the horrors and terrible destruction entailed in it, to fructify in their minds ideas like—"this world is evanescent, why should one resort to killing to enjoy the unreal benefits of an unreal world?" All these tricks have been played by the Dhṛta-raṣṭra's party (the usurpers) against the "Dispossessed" party of the Pāṇḍavas. It is truly said, "the Devil can cite scriptures for his purpose".

The conquerors insolent by brute strength quote scriptures in their favour, give out yarns about universal good and world peace. They represent themselves as working for the good of humanity and their opponents striving to get back their last kingdom as disturbers of peace. Their object is that the conquered should make no attempt to get into their own under the spell of such religious sermons, and should be content to remain in subjection. The Kauravas had also tried this game of preaching religion to the Pāṇḍavas.

*Diplomacy of Dhṛta-raṣṭra.*—In the light of the Sub-parva, "Sañjaya-yana" or The Embassy of Sañjaya, of the Mahabharata it should become clear to the reader why Arjuna, such a great world-conqueror (Vijayah) as he was, had a fit of dejection\* at the critical moment, why his mind was full of indifference to the world even on the eve of war and why he was prepared even to retire to the forest. This last attempt of the Kauravas to dissuade the Pāṇḍavas from going to war by preaching religious sermons is indicative of the crooked Macchia-

\* Dejection ? or Dispassion towards worldly pleasures ? (vide Appendix I).

vellian diplomacy. Macchiavellian diplomacy is as follows: "War should be the only study of a prince. He should consider peace only as a breathing time, which gives him leisure to contrive, and furnishes an ability to execute, military plans," of the Imperialists. Dhṛta-raṣṭra knowing that the Pāṇḍavas were by instinct righteous hoped to catch them in the net by sermons and sent Sañjaya to their camp. The sermons of Sañjaya were listened to by every one, but they produced greater impression on Arjuna's mind. With the frightful picture of war and the consequent universal slaughter before his mind's eye his ideas roused by the sermons of Sañjaya came to a head, and he threw his Gāṇḍīva. Dhṛta-raṣṭra knew this too well and in order to know about the success of his tricks he asks Sañjaya, "what happened?"

*Sañjaya's Sermon.*—Dhṛta-raṣṭra says to Sañjaya: "Please go to the Pāṇḍava camp and tell them that I send them my best wishes, that I am full of praises for them, and that I am glad they have returned safe from their ājñatavāsa. I desire not war but peace, so that they should be ready for a settlement. With such sermons on Peace try to abate their war-fervour."

From this it is obvious that Dhṛta-raṣṭra had decidedly no desire for peace based on equality, his only desire was to dampen the enthusiasm of the Pāṇḍavas for a righteous war for the restoration of their kingdom, which he had usurped. Such is the underground politics of the Imperialists!

*Sañjaya's Address.*—"O Dharma (Yudhiṣṭhira—meaning "Firm in war," keeping to one's post in war, the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas), you are good men and would not violate the rules of morality even in peril. Blessed are you who have forgiven all the sinful acts of the Kauravas. It is not likely that after living a moral life so far you will commit the sin of killing your kith and kin (svajana) including Duryodhan blinded by self-interest. The duty of a Kshatriya is like that of a butcher and involves great cruelty. It does not behove you to be cruel, and I am certain you would not indulge in such cruelty by going to war. You know how Dhṛta-raṣṭra is fond of you and how he is striving for your good day and night. But Duryodhan, maddened with imperial authority would not listen to him. Would you for his sins kill the sons of Dhṛta-raṣṭra and make the old man a mourner for all the rest of his life? This is not in conformity with your character as righteous men.

"Blessed are you, O Dharma, who are without an enemy (ajātaśatru), and bear no grudge to us. You have stuck to moral principles even at the cost of much suffering, and can we not expect you to vote for peace with the Kauravas? Your brothers too are souls of righteousness and it rests solely with you to avoid

the impending destruction of the family. If you wish everyone to be happy, I recommend to you to come to a settlement and obtain the merit (*punya*) of preserving the Bharata race. Even a trifling act of immorality committed by you would bring discredit to the clan of the Pāṇḍavas, and even a territory won in such a war is more terrible than defeat on account of the extinction of the whole family; moreover, there is no knowing who will win or who will lose; in either case one thing is inevitable, namely, the destruction of the whole family. Such an immoral act ending in the extinction of one's family is unworthy of men of good character.

*Even Begging is Good.*—\* “O Dharma, after following the path of morality, how do you now demean yourself? For war is the business of mean-minded people and not of the high-minded souls like you. The Kauravas being your own kinsmen (*swajana*) it is your bounden duty to do good to them, and this has always been your practice. For example, when the Ghandarvas imprisoned Duryodhan it is you that saved him. Are the same Kauravas to be slaughtered now? That is butcher's work, unworthy of the Pāṇḍavas. So you should hail peace.

“O Dharma, you know that life is transient and no one is immortal. Will the Pāṇḍavas live for ever after killing their kinsmen? Certainly not. It is true that the Kauravas deprived you of your rightful patrimony, but they are your kinsmen, and it is just the same whether such transient objects like kingdom are enjoyed by them or by you. Failing the restoration of your kingdom, you observe the Rules of Religion even by begging alms. On the contrary, you will be committing a heinous sin by going to war and destroying your own family.

*The World is Transitory.*—“Man's life is transitory, and I ask you how long you could enjoy the kingdom regained after the slaughter of your kinsmen? It does not redound to your glory to regain the kingdom by the extinction of your family in a murderous war. Men are incited to such cruel acts only by longing for material objects; hence you should control this wicked desire as it is unworthy of a wise man like you. Happiness is not sure even after conquering the whole world. To sacrifice mundane pleasures for the happiness of the other world is the right thing to do. Nothing can be gained in war and slaughter. So it behoves you to accumulate merit (*punyasādhan*); while if you destroy family out of selfishness, only perpetual hell will be in store for you. So far you have not fallen a prey to resentment, and it is a surprise that you are not subject to the

perverse condition of egoism. Alas! that your pure mind should be inclined towards a cruel deed like waging a war. In this way you will kill the venerable Grand Sire Bhishma, and the worthy Preceptor Drona. What pleasure would be acquired by you by killing your kinsmen and well-wishers and enjoying a kingdom "steeped in blood?" भुञ्जीय भोगान् रुधिरप्रादिग्धान् (Gita II. 5)

As surely as you know the path of morality, so surely you should desist from this cruel deed, should observe tranquility and abjure the plan of waging war with the Kauravas."

In this manner, Sanjaya preached the sermon to the Pāṇḍavas before the war, and the despondency of Arjuna can be said to be the reflex of those ideas, which made an impression on him and made him think that it was a sin to wage war even for getting back his kingdom rightfully, while it is meritorious indeed to live on alms.

This manoeuvre was designed by Dhṛta-raṣṭra to make sure that Arjuna would adhere to this sentiment. If Arjuna's mind had thoroughly imbibed this advice, the Empire of the Kauravas would have become stable, and the Pāṇḍavas would have been deprived for ever of their patrimony. But that "was not to be" for several reasons, which follow later.

*Comment.*—We observe here the game played by the Imperialist party to remove from the minds of the conquered the idea of waging the war of liberty. The conquerors here are posing—although Satanic themselves—to preach a sermon on religion and to entice the minds of the conquered to the high principles of morality and are thus dissuading them from attempting to get back their own kingdom. People aiming at self-government should note this and should take the sermons preached by the conquering nation with a "grain of salt," or else, in the nick of time, during their struggle their mental condition would be analogous to that of Arjuna. In the above sermon Sanjaya is preaching at the instance of Dhṛta-raṣṭra the doctrine of Peace to the Pāṇḍavas, as if they alone were the cause of the discord. From the beginning all the injustice is on the side of the Kauravas, and yet they take a leading part in the attempt to create amity just on the eve of the war. It is precisely because this deceitful sermon had produced a partial effect on Arjuna that he felt dejected at the critical time. (Sātvalekar.)

Bhishma (meaning the Dreadful) was so called not only because of his great valour as a Kshatriya, but also because of his dreadful vow (Bhishma-pratijñā) of life-long celibacy; and when his step-mother, Satyawati, persuaded him to accept *grīhaṣṭhaśram* (married life, householders' life) at a stage when the genealogical line was on the verge of extinction, he declined to do so.

As Prof. Winternitz puts it, "Bhishma, mindful of his vow of chastity decalres that though the Sun-god may give up his brilliance, the fire-god his bravery, and the god-Dharma his justice he could never break his promise." Indeed Bhishma proved Bhishma to the last. The story is briefly this:

King Shantanu while out for hunting in the forest on the banks of the Jumna meets and falls in love with Satyawati (Matsya-gandhi), a charming fisher-girl. He seeks her hand in marriage, but her father, a clever fisher-man-chief that he is, stipulates that only his daughter's children should succeed to the throne. The king sets his face against the proposition, for it means depriving the noble Devavrata, his son by the Ganga, of his birthright. He returns home down-hearted to suffer his sorrow in secret. Sensing the cause of his father's sorrow, Devavrata approaches the fisher-man-chief, but the latter is unyielding. Devavrata finally decides to make the supreme sacrifice to make his father happy. He first takes a vow renouncing his right to the throne and then vows Brahmacharya for life, so that there may be no risk of his children claiming the kingdom later.

This great sacrifice, known as the *Bhishma-pratijñā* (the dreadful vow) earns for Devavrata the name of "Bhishma" and the undying praise of gods and men. It has also obtained for him from his father the boon of "dying at will" (*ichhāmṛithi*).

Devavrata was also known as Shāntanava after his father Shantanu, and also as Gāngeya after his mother Ganga, the River-goddess of that name. Ganga was a lovely lady of many virtues. She was believed to be a goddess—embodying in herself the sacred spirit of Mother—Ganga herself.

*His Principles.*—Bhishma loved the sons of Pandu with a father's loving heart,

But from troth unto Duryodhan, righteous Bhishma would not part!

"Sons of Pandu!" said the Chieftain, "Prince Duryodhan is my lord,

Bhishma is no faithless servant, nor will break his pledged word,

Valiant are ye, noble princes, but the chief is yet unborn,  
While I lead the course of battle, who the tide of war can turn!

Listen more, with vanquished foemen, or who falls or takes to flight,

Casts his weapons, craves for mercy ancient Bhishma doth not fight,

Bhishma doth not fight a rival who submits, fatigued and worn,

Bhishma doth not fight the wounded, doth not fight a woman born ! ”

*Bhishma Vadha (Fall of Bhishma).*—On the ninth day of the War, Bhishma mowed down the Pāṇḍava army “as a forest conflagration (*vadavāgni*) on the parched woodland feeds.” Sree Krishna told Arjuna, “If you want to save our army from utter destruction you should kill Bhishma. He has vowed that he will not fight a woman, or against a person who was born a woman. So send Sikandin (eldest son of King Drupada) who was born a woman and changed her sex for a male’s with a *yaksha* in order to kill Bhishma, who had ruined her in her former birth as Amba, and shoot him down standing behind Sikhandin.” Arjuna said : “Alas, I cannot fight behind another, nor achieve the fall of Bhishma by foul means. I loved him when I was a child and sat on his knees and, called him “father.” I would rather die than kill that saintly hero in such a manner.” Krishna replied, “It is fated that Bhishma will fall tomorrow, a victim of wrongs, in return for his wrongs to Amba. He has fought you despite his love for you and will kill you if he can ; I cannot see why you should refuse to fight and kill him.” Thus urged Arjuna directed his chariot to be taken to where Bhishma was. With a single arrow he cut Bhishma’s bow-string. Bhishma took another bow and Arjuna cut that bow-string also. Crying out that Arjuna was really a worthy foeman, Bhishma took yet another bow. Krishna angrily rebuked Arjuna for the mild way in which he was fighting Bhishma and got down from the chariot and with a whip in hand ran towards Bhishma to fight and kill him. Bhishma cried out : “Come, come, what better death can I hope for?” Arjuna ran after Krishna promising to fight Bhishma seriously, and made Krishna resume his seat as charioteer. The Sun was about to set that day and nothing further could be done.

Next day, the 10th day of the war, before morning broke Yudhishthira with his brothers went and saw Bhishma. Krishna was also present. Bhishma smiled and told Yudhishthira and Arjuna, “you can only kill me in the way suggested to Arjuna already. I shall never fight against Sikhandin.” So the next morning, the Pāṇḍavas put Sikhandin in front, and Arjuna stood behind him. As soon as he saw Sikhandin, the advancing Bhishma, suddenly stopped fighting, despite Sikhandin’s discharging three arrows at him. Bhishma said, “I shall never fight you back, you who were born a woman.” Arjuna discharged two powerful arrows and Bhishma fell from his chariot head foremost exclaiming :

"These arrows which struck me like Indra's Vajrayudha (thunder-bolt) could never have been discharged by Sikhandin, but only by Arjuna. He said that his father King Shantanu had given him the boon to "die at will" (ichhamriti) and that he will postpone death till the Uttarayana sets in. He asked Duryodhan to give the Pāṇḍavas their half of the kingdom and stop the carnage. He implored Karna not to fight his brother. But all this advice fell on deaf ears, and the war went on.

Next, Arjuna made for Bhishma a bed of arrows (*sharatalpa*) at the latter's request and the Grand Sire lay on it awaiting the setting in of the Uttarayana, when the gates of heaven are said to be wide open. Uttarayana commences on the Makara Sankramana day, that is, on the 14th January every year and terminates about the 15th July succeeding. Bhishma felt thirsty and asked Arjuna to discharge an arrow into the ground and get him cool water of a fountain. Arjuna discharged a *perjann-yāstra* (rain-producing missile) and made Ganga-water gush out from the ground. Bhishma drank eagerly and said, "I am glad to be freed from this slaughter of kinsmen without failing to do my duty as a Kshatriya."

To Duryodhan he spoke as follows :—

"Vain, Duryodhan, is this contest,  
And thy mighty host is vain,  
Why with blood of friendly nations  
Drench this red and reeking\* plain?

"They must win who, strong in virtue,  
Fight for virtue's stainless laws,  
Doubly armed the stalwart warrior  
Who is armed in righteous cause.

\* \* \*

"Krishna now hath come to Arjun,  
Krishna drives his battle-car,  
Gods nor men can face these heroes  
In the field of righteous war,

"Ruin frowns on thee, Duryodhan,  
And upon thy impious State,  
In thy pride and in thy folly  
Thou hast courted Cruel Fate,

"Bhishma still will do his duty,  
And his end it is not far,  
Then many other chieftains follow,  
Fatal is this Kuru war!"

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\* Reeking=shedding blood.

Next, to Karna, he said :

Pride and envy, noble Karna,  
Filled our war-like hearts with strife,  
Discord ends with breath departing  
Envy sinks with fleeting life !

\* \* \*

" Arjun beats not noble Karna,  
In the deeds of valour done,  
Nor excels in birth and lineage,  
Karna, thou art Pritha's son !

" Pritha bore thee, still unwedded,  
And the Sun inspired thy birth,  
God-born man ! No mightier archer  
Treads this broad and spacious earth,

" Pritha cast thee in her sorrow,  
Hid thee with a maiden's shame,  
And a driver, not thy father,  
Nursed thee, chief of war-like fame,

" Arjun is thy brother, Karna,  
End this sad fraternal war,  
Seek not life-blood of thy brother  
Nor against him drive thy car."

Vain, alas, the voice of Bhishma like  
the voice of angel spoke,

Hatred dearer than his life-blood in  
the vengeful Karna woke.

Thus amongst the venerable mortals who offered their lives to the cause of justice with a spiritualistic view Bhishma stands supreme. In the fall of this noble hero there is an ideal as well as a practical aspect of life exhibited free from the least blemish.

Compare :

" Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing leave behind us  
Foot-prints on the sands of time ;

" Foot-prints that perhaps another,  
Sailing over life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and ship-wrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

" Let us, then, be up and doing  
With a heart, for any fate ;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labour and to wait."

(A Psalm of Life—Longfellow)



[These lines we studied as students of the II Form without understanding their real significance at that age, but more for the beauty of the poetry than anything else.]

On the fall of Bhishma, Drona, the Brahmana Chief and Preceptor of the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas, becomes the Commander of the Kuru forces. For five days he held his own against the Pāṇḍavas. At last, Drona slew his ancient foe, King Drupada of the Panchalas, and was then slain by Drupada's son, Dhristadyumna, the prince of the Panchalas. The reader is here referred to Gita I-8, which means as follows :

"Behold, O Master, the mighty armies of the Pāṇḍavas arrayed for battle by your talented pupil Dhristadyumna, son of Drupada."

*Note.*—As a diplomat, Duryodhan was exceptionally clever. In order to excite Dronacharya by rousing his revengeful spirit against Dhristadyumna and ire against the Pāṇḍavas, Duryodhan referred to Dhristadyumna as Drupada's son and "your talented pupil." By these words he reminded Drona of Drupada's ugly behaviour towards him in the long past, and then of his getting Dhristadyumna as his son by the performance of penance and sacrifice with the unholy motive of killing Drona. By implication he also said that Dhristadyumna was so clever and Drona so simple that though the former was born to kill the latter, he had obtained instructions in archery from Drona. And then, how skilful and dexterous he was to array his army as to baffle his opponents. It was such a person that the Pāṇḍavas have chosen as their commander.

Mention should, however, be made here of Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna by Subhadra, sister of Sree Krishna. He is the precocious soldier with the unrivalled bravery and impetuosity of young blood. While more experienced and elderly heroes stayed back, Abhimanyu rushes to attack the *Drona-vyuha*, the Spider-trapped inside and killed by Drona, Karna, Jayadratha and three other *Maharathis*, contrary to the tenets or dogmas of Dharma-yuddha.

"Rushed upon his startled foe-men,  
Abhimanyu fought and fell,  
And his deeds to distant ages,  
Bards and wandering minstrels tell."

(*Romesh Dutt*)

After the fall of Drona, Karna was made the Leader of the Kuru forces. He held his own for two days. The great contest between Karna and Arjuna, long expected and long deferred, came on at last. "It is the crowning incident of the Mahabharata," says Romesh Dutt\* as the contest between Hector and Achilles is the crowning incident of the Iliad. With a truer artistic skill than that of Homer, the Indian Poet, the sage Vyasa, represents Karna as equal to Arjuna in strength and skill and his defeat is only due to an accident. It is only necessary here to add that the sons of Pandu, as well as Karna, were, like the heroes of Homer, god-born chiefs. Some god inspired the birth of each. Yudhisthira was the son of Yama-Dharma, Bhima of Vāyu, the Wind, Arjuna of Indra, the Rain-god, the twins youngest Nakula and Sahadeva were the sons of Mādrā Devi, by the Ashwini Devas, and Karna was the son of Surya—the Sun-god, but was believed by himself and by all others to be the son of a simple chariot-driver Adiratha by name. (vide ante)

When Karna was born of Kunthi begotten by the Sun-god, she was only a virgin. The child was therefore thrown into the river and was picked up by Adiratha and brought up as his own son. Karna was born with a *Kavacha* or natural armour for the body, and a pair of *kundalas* or ear-rings, one for either ear. Later, the boy became the friend of Duryodhan, who treated him as his own brother and employed him in his service; and Karna's loyalty to Duryodhan was remarkable and was unaltered till the end; and his steadfast devotion to duty was unequalled and even excelled, it is said, that of his brother Yudhisthira (Dharmaputra). This is well illustrated by Karna's refusal to change over to the side of the Pandavas when, at the instance of Sree Krishna, Kunthi called on him (Karna) and revealed to him the secret of his birth, and pleaded with him to come over to the side of the Pāṇḍavas, and be their leader, with Karna's chances of success in war and becoming the Emperor. Karna respectfully declined the offer and said that he will remain "true to his salt." Kunthi, however, succeeded in getting from him the alternative promise that he will not use the Naga-astra (serpent missile) a second time against the Pāṇḍavas. This alternative promise was asked of Karna by Kunthi at the suggestion of Sree Krishna. When during the actual fight with Arjuna, Karna aimed the Naga-astra (serpent missile) at Arjuna, Sree Krishna contrived to save the latter by sinking the chariot at the right moment so that the missile passed over the head of Arjuna.

One other glorious trait of character in Karna is 'tyaga'—munificence. He was a great "giver" (*dāṭā*), and gave away

\* The Epic of the Bharatas—University College, London, published on 13-8-1899.

his kavacha and karna-kun-dalas, which were protective of safety given to him by his father, the Sun-god, at birth. Devendra in disguise of a poor Brahmana begs of Karna for the gift of these, and though fore-warned by the Sun-god as to the identity of the beggar and having been sure of the consequences of his action, Karna unhesitatingly hands over the things to him, and wins the admiration of the world; and he told the father that he would rather risk his life than obtain infamy resulting from non-compliance with the beggar's request.

When Karna was struck by Arjuna's arrows and was in his death-bed, Sree Krishna went to him as an old Brahmana and begged him for the gift of his store of *punya* which he had acquired, and even at that critical moment Karna was happy that he was in a position to give the beggar whatever he asked for. This is *dharma* of the highest order and Karna was blessed with the Vision of Sree Vishnu, whose Avatar Sree Krishna was. Next only to Arjuna as in the Gita, Karna is the only human being who was blessed with the Vision of Vishnu by Sree Krishna!

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After the death of Karna, Salya, the Mādrā Prince, led the Kuru troops on the 18th day, the last day of the War, and fell. A midnight slaughter in the Pāṇḍava Camp, perpetrated by Ashwathama, the vengeful son of Drona, concludes the War. And Duryodhan, left wounded by Bhima, blessed Aswathama "with his feeble fleeting breath, joy of vengeance cheered his bosom and he died a happy death."

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Bhishma dies and is cremated, but the endless exposition of laws, legends and moral rules, which he had started is not yet over. And Sree Krishna Himself takes up the task in a New Book, and as he had done once before in the Bhagavat Gita, he now once more explains to Arjuna in the Anu-gita (later Gita) the great Truth, about Soul and Emancipation, Creation and the Wheel of Life, True Knowledge and Rites and Penance.

Yudhisthira has in the meantime been crowned King of the Kurus at Hastinapura, and a posthumous child of Abhimanyu is named Parikshit and is destined to succeed to the throne. But Yudhisthira's mind is still troubled with the thoughts of the carnage of the war of which he considers himself guilty, and the great Sage Vyasa advises the performance of *Ashwamedha yaga* (Sacrifice of the Horse), for the expiation of the sin.

The Sacrifice of the Horse was an ancient Hindu custom practised by kings exercising suzerain powers over the surrounding kings. A horse was let free and was allowed to wander from place to place accompanied by the king's guard. If any neighbouring king ventured to detain the horse, it was a signal of war. If no king ventured to restrain the wanderer it was considered a tacit mark of submission to the owner of the animal. And when the horse returned home from its perigrinations, it was sacrificed with great pomp and splendour at a feast to which all the neighbouring kings were invited.

The real Epic ends with the War and with the funerals of the deceased warriors, and Yudhisthira's Horse-sacrifice is rather a crowning ornament than a part of the solid edifice. Next, the Pandava brothers decided to retire, and leaving the Kingdom to the care of Parikshit started with Draupadi towards the Himalayas. As they went one by one fell down dead on the way. Yudhisthira plodded, Draupadi and a stray dog accompanied him faithfully all along. At last Draupadi also died. Yudhisthira was alone now ascending the peaks beyond Badrinath, where celestial Angels brought a Divine chariot for him to go bodily to Heaven. But the dog—No,—Dogs cannot get into the celestial chariot!—much less can they go to Heaven bodily! Yudhisthira, the embodiment of righteousness, unhesitatingly said, "All right, then, I too do not want the enjoyment of Heaven if I have to discard for it a faithful friend—be it a dumb animal, a dog."

At this the dog took the real form, it was Yama-Dharma Himself, the Father of Yudhisthira by invocation, come as a dog to test the righteousness (*dharma-nishtā*) of His son. Yudhisthira went to Heaven where he met his brothers and other relatives.

The cause of the Pandavas was just. People who have this cause at heart will behave according to the Rules of Dharma (justice or righteousness) and will fight to get justice. King Yudhisthira (one who is steady in war) also named "Dharma" becomes the representative of Justice and is behaving according to the Rules of Morality. "Being steady in war" he does not budge an inch from the right path or position he has taken and plays his part uniformly in spite of varying conditions. The war of liberation of the Pandavas is a *dharma-yuddha* (a righteous war), an important feature of which is *to stick to one's post and not to retire or flee*. The word "yudhi-sthira" also suggests that every warrior is "to keep to his post." People taking part in such a war are sure to be victorious if they can learn how to *keep to their posts*. Victory is for those who go ahead instead of turning their backs to the battle-field. To a true Kshatriya like Arjuna victory or defeat in such a war is practically the same. Says Sree Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna:

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।  
तस्मात् उत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥

(Gita II-17)

"Slain, wilt thou attain to heaven (*Veeraswarga*),  
Victorious, thou wilt enjoy the affluent Kingdom on earth ;  
Therefore, arise,\* O Kunthi's son,  
Resolved in battle to engage."

(Gita II-17)

"Dharma" is one to whom there are no born enemies (*ajātashatru*), he does not hate anybody, does not hate even an enemy; on the other hand, he strives for the latter's spiritual advancement and appreciates his good qualities. Such a character is Yudhisthira (better known as Dharmaputra, so called because of having been begotten of Yama-Dharma), the eldest of the Pandava Brothers who think that they are blessed by obedience to his orders. A redoubtable ambidextrous warrior (*savyasāchi*) like Arjuna, an incomparable fighter like Bhima (*bheema-karma*) of terrible deeds, valiant warriors like Nakula and Sahadeva, twin-brothers (sons of the Ashwini Devatas by their mother, Mādrī) obey Dharmaputra's orders loyally and without demur, though he was for Peace while others were for war. Bhima (son of God Vayu by invocation) like Balarama, Sree Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, was for war and at times resented the advice of Dharmaputra, as that was his (Bhima's) inborn nature. Arjuna too was not as much for non-violence as his elder brother Dharmaputra, and Nakula and Sahadeva closely followed Arjuna. As for their Consort Draupadi, her *beau idéal* was Bhima. So Dharma stood alone in his pacifism. This irritated the rest of the Brothers, who at times, protested against Dharmaputra's creed of non-violence; yet they all obeyed him implicitly to the last.

Bhima was really *bhima* or *bhayankarah*, and was known as *bheema karma Vrakodara* or "The wolf-bellied one of terrible deeds." Terrible in strength, coarse in manners, ruthless in execution, he was a "Caveman personified." When Draupadi is dragged by her hair by the wicked Duhshasan in the open Assembly Hall, Bhima swears to drink his blood and actually does so later on; and when Duryodhan invites her to sit on his lap Bhima swears to break that thigh and eventually does so. "No half-measures of revenge will do for the child of that nature," says an Author.

*The Creed of Non-violence.*—Supposing non-violence was for Dharmaputra a creed and for others only a policy, and that Dharmaputra was the leader of the people agitating for autonomy, we can account for the co-operation of the "violent" followers

\* Arise—Rise to the occasion !

with the "non-violent" leader, by regarding it as diplomatic. All the brothers except Dharmaputra may be regarded as leaders of men in their camp, and Draupadi as the leader of women. It is clear that these organisations were obeying the orders of a non-violent leader and carrying out their programmes by observing strict discipline. From this an important moral principle becomes evident, namely, "if these warriors had not obeyed Dharmaputra, and had, instead of observing non-violence, practised violence by acting individually and following their own opinion, they would have been easily crushed by the Kauravas, since they would have been disunited by difference of opinion among themselves. But owing to the religious and non-violent character of Dharmaputra and the silent forbearance on the part of the Pandavas as a whole, and to the atrocities perpetrated on them by the Kauravas, the sympathies of the people and even of some of the warriors on the side of the Kauravas were all in their favour. This helped them to increase their power so as to ensure victory in their final struggle for their lost kingdom." (Sātvalekar).

We thus see that by bearing calmly all the sufferings, and by following the path of non-violence and spiritual advancement, one can secure the sympathy and goodwill of the people and acquire the moral strength arising from it. Those who practise violence from the first are certainly deprived of this source of strength.

*God's Help.*—Another striking factor is that Sree Kṛṣṇa, Lord of Dwaraka, was ready to help the Pandavas in every way. He was a great warrior, wise philosopher and skilled expert in the art of war. Yet he had taken the vow not to wield a weapon and not to fight. With such a vow of non-violence, he came to the side of the Pandavas. So both these leaders, Sree Kṛṣṇa and Dharmaputra, were pacifists. Despite this they were compelled to fight.

*Victory of the Righteous.*—The final victory of the Pandavas was due, it may be said, to implicit obedience to the two leaders. "Victory" (Vijaya, another name of Arjuna) is always the brother of "Dharma" (another name of Yudhisthira, Dharmaputra) and a friend and devotee of God-Incarnate (Sree Kṛṣṇa), and the Blessings of Mahākālī have come to be true!

And in the words of Sanjaya :

"Wherever is Sree Kṛṣṇa, Lord of Yoga,  
Wherever that archer Arjuna is,  
There is Fortune, Power and Victory,  
And lasting Wisdom, so I am convinced."

(Gītā XVIII-78)

In this connection should also be mentioned the force of Draupadi's *pativrata-dharma* and her divine nature,\* which tended towards the victory of the Pandavas. Draupadi is "the ideal woman, beautiful beyond the dreams of men, able to retain the undying love of all her five heroic husbands differing so widely in their temperament. She was so intelligent that she flouted the legal Pundits at the Court of Dhritarastra by proving that Yudhishthira after becoming a slave to Duryodhan by losing in the dyutha-gamble (throwing of dice) could not own any right to stake her. She was utterly fearless. Even now thousands of rustics all over India and especially in the South, take her name at Draupadi-Amman Festival, and do fire-walking nonchalantly to the amazement of the saint and sinner alike." And daily meditation on these five chaste women—Ahalya, Draupadi, Sita, Tara and Mandodari—absolves one, it is said, from even the worst of sins!

*The Message of the Mahabharata.*—The Mahabharata of Sage Vyasa is comparable only to the Ramayana of Sage Valmiki in its hold over the millions of Hindus, "a hold which the Titan of Time has failed to render less strong." Dharmaputra is still the inspiring example of all who have made Truthfulness (Satya) and Righteousness (Dharma) the only motive force of their action. Karna is still the greatest object of comparison for the munificent. Arjuna, the Nara, is still loved as the Ideal man of Action. And which Hindu is there whom the faith does not sustain that in his hour of trial, when everybody has forsaken him, the Lord, the Saviour of Draupadi during her *mānabhangā* by the wicked Duhshasana, will come to his rescue? (See Chapter VIII)

"The Mahabharata is revered as the Fifth Veda, and its Author, Sage Vyasa, is looked upon as no other than God Narayana-Incarnate, for "who else could be the Author of such a great work?"

"The Epic says of itself; "On Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, what is found here is found elsewhere, what is not present here can be seen nowhere else."

Nothing less than Satya and Dharma forms the theme of this great Epic. Its poetry has its immediate purpose in the reader's enjoyment of its art, and its next purpose in the moral awakening Dharma Vyutpatti (धर्मव्युत्पत्ति) which takes place in the readers' hearts. The latter is an Injunction calling us to do as Yudhishthira did and to shun what Duryodhan did.

It must thus be evident to the reader that "woven into the fabric of the great Epic, the Mahabharata, runs the thread of a

\* "Her no human mother bore,  
Sprung from Altar as Drupad's stainless daughter." (Romesh Dutt)

high moral purpose, of the triumph of Virtue and subjugation of Vice."

"The Mahabharata," says Biren Roy, "is a saga woven round a central ethical idea with metaphysical overtones. The Gita is the epitome of Indian Philosophy uniting empiricism and transcendentalism into a complete view of Life"

"God's in His Heaven,

All's right with the World!"—Robert Browning.

*General Remarks.*—"The poems of Homer," says Mr. Gladstone "differ from all other known poetry in this, that they constitute in themselves an encyclopædia of life and knowledge; at a time when knowledge, indeed, such as lies beyond the bounds of actual experience, was extremely limited, and when life was singularly fresh, vivid and expansive." "This remark applies with even greater force to the Mahabharata," says Romesh Dutt, "it is an encyclopædia of the life and knowledge of Ancient India. And it discloses to us an ancient and forgotten world, a proud and noble civilisation which has passed away. Northern India was then parcelled among war-like races living side by side under their war-like kings, speaking the same language, performing the same religious rites and ceremonies, rejoicing in a common literature, rivalling each other in their schools of philosophy and learning as in the arts of peace and civilisation, and forming a confederation of Hindu nations unknown to and unknowing to the outside world. What this confederation of nations has done for the cause of human knowledge and human civilisation is a matter of history. Their inquiries into the hidden truths of religion, embalmed in the ancient Upanishads, have never been excelled within the last 3000 years. Their enquiries into philosophy, preserved in the Sankya and Vedanta systems, were the first systems of true philosophy which the world produced. And their great works of imagination, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, will be placed without hesitation by the side of Homer by critics who survey the world's literature from a lofty standpoint, and judge impartially of the wares turned out by the hand of man in all parts of the globe.

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## CHAPTER II

### *The Greatness of the Gita, and the Need for its Study.*

There are books and books written by various authors, and from time to time, but only few of them attain the position of Classics, and not more than half a dozen perhaps have come to be recognised as Scriptures. Of these, the pre-eminent is the Bhagavad Gita—this incomparable converse between God and Man. Edwin Arnold named it—"The Song Celestial," William von Humboldt characterised it as "the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song in any known tongue." Writes Aldous Huxley,\* the erstwhile agnostic, in his profound and lucid introduction to Swami Prabhavananda and Isherwood's English Translation of the Gita: "The Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summary ever made of Perennial Philosophy; hence its enduring value not only for Indians but for all mankind." In 1784 the great Warren Hastings, First Governor-General of India, wrote that the Gita was a performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and dictum almost unequalled." The message of the Gita is not only immortal but is universal in its scope. It has continued to inspire the revolutionary as well as the reactionary. Referring to its immortality, Warren Hastings also wrote, in his Introduction to the English translation of the Gita by Charles Wilkins (1785) that "works like the Bhagavat Gita will survive when the British Dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist and when the resources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance."

The Gita is the first Samskrit work to be translated into English. It has also been translated into Persian by Abul Fazl and Falzi. Lately it has been translated into Russian. "The first Japanese translation of the Bhagavat Gita will be published in Tokyo next month" says a Bombay message dated 9th May 1958. Sponsored by the Indo-Japanese Association, the translation, with a detailed commentary was made by a Japanese Author, the late Takafumi-Ishida. The Indian Embassy in Tokyo is supervising the publication of the translation. The Translation of a range of Indian classics will follow. (Nafen).

"The Gita may be described," writes Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in his admirable book—Hinduism and Buddhism—"as a compendium of the whole Vedic doctrine to be found in the earlier Vedas, Brahmanas and Upanishads, and being therefore the basis of all the later developments it can be regarded as the focus of all Indian religion."

\* Vide Appendix V-3.

"But this focus of Indian religion," says Aldous Huxley, "is also one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the Perennial Philosophy ever to have been made. Hence its enduring value not only for Indians but for all mankind." (Vide Appendix V—3).

The Gita is composed by Sree Vedavyasa, the Author of the Mahabharata, "the poet of poets," and the first and foremost Prophet of the human race. It is the message of the world's great Teacher—Sree Kṛṣṇa—the One Who incarnated "Manhood—Triumphant"; of Him, Whom generations have worshipped as God Himself. Its central idea is that God descended into the mortal frame, took *avatar* as Sree Kṛṣṇa, and through the inspirations of the Gita taught Arjuna to "know Him, come to Him and be Him." This idea has been the most precious possession of India, and has been accessible to all men, irrespective of the bonds of race, sex or latitude.

This Gospel has given more than human power to countless souls for over twenty-five hundred years, to Shankara and Ramanuja, to Vivekananda and Lokamanya Tilak and Gandhiji among the moderns. Buddhists and Jains also seem to have been influenced by the Gita.

"The Knowledge of its teaching," said Sree Samkara in the 7th Century (686 A.D.) "leads to the realisation of all human aspirations." Tilak saw in it "Knowledge untouched by time," the only gospel of Life. Aurobindo called it "the World's greatest Scripture, a powerful shaping factor in the revival of a nation and a culture." Gandhiji called it "the Universal Mother"; every moment of his life was a testimony to its undying vitality. In his own words: "The Gita is a loving but silent guide in the shape of a *sadguru*. It answers all my difficulties and has been my *Kāmadhenu*, my guide, my Open Sesame in hundreds of moments of doubt and difficulty. I find a solace in the Gita that I miss even in the Sermon in the Mount."

"I have not been able to see any difference between the Sermon in the Mount and the Bhagavad Gita. What the Sermon describes in graphic manner, the Gita reduces to a scientific formula."

"When doubts haunt me, when disappointment stares me in the face and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Gita, and find a verse to comfort me, and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life is full of external tragedies, and if they have not left any visible and indelible effects on me I owe it to the teachings of that great work, the Gita-Sastra."

"Man is not at peace with himself till he has become like-unto God."

"The endeavour to reach this "State Supreme," is the only ambition worth having. And this is self-realisation. This self-realisation is the subject of the Gita, as it is of all scriptures. But, its author surely did not write it to establish that doctrine. The object of the Gita appears to me to be that of showing the most excellent way to attain self-realisation. That which is to be found, more or less clearly spread out here and there in Hindu religious books, has been brought out in the clearest possible language in the Gita even at the risk of repetition. *That matchless remedy is renunciation of the fruits of action.* This is the centre round which the Gita is woven." (Mahatma Gandhi).

"In times of Crisis" says Nehruji\* "when the mind of man is tortured by doubt and is torn by the conflict of duties, it has turned all the more to the Gita for light and guidance. For it is a poem of crisis, of political and social crisis, and even more so of crisis in the spirit of man."

The Gita has also provided the inspiration to immortal works like the Bhagavata and Goswami Tulsidas's Rāmacharita-mānas, which have shaped and strengthened the eternal edifice of Indian Culture.

The Gita has a universality which embraces every aspect of human action, suits and elevates every stage of human development. To the common man, high or low, it carries a message of new life. Like unto the Sun, its influence has infused, created and stimulated life; destroyed the germ of decay and death; created and re-integrated fresh life to suit new conditions.

"The Gita is not a treatise of metaphysical philosophy, inspite of the great mass of metaphysical ideas which arise incidentally in its pages; for, here, no metaphysical truth is brought into expression solely for its own sake. It seeks the highest truth for the highest practical utility, not for intellectual or even spiritual satisfaction, but as the truth that saves and opens to us the passage from our present mortal imperfection to an immortal perfection." (Sri Aurobindo).

"The Gita is not a scripture of the next World," writes K. M. Munshi† "nor of asceticism, nor of inactions. It is an intensely human document, a guide for every human situation. It urges man in the thick of life's battle to shed his limitations and by self-discipline to attain the dimensions of Divinity. It is a gospel which teaches the "Life-Triumphant" whereby man, in life, may attain the proportions of God."

\* "Discovery of India" and "India Rediscovered" by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

† "Gita and the Modern World"—B. V. B. Publication, Bombay-7.

"The Gita deals essentially with the spiritual background of human existence"—writes Nehruji in his "Discovery of India" and it is in this context that the practical problems of every-day-life appear. It is a call to action, to meet the obligations and duties of life, but always keeping in view that spiritual background and the larger purpose of the Universe. Inaction is condemned, and action and life have to be in accordance with the highest ideals of the age—*Yugadharma*—for these ideals themselves may vary from age to age. The *Yugadharma*, the ideal of the particular age has always to be kept in view.

"Because modern India," continues Nehruji, "is full of frustration and has suffered from too much quietism, the call to action makes a special appeal. It is also possible to interpret that action in modern terms as action for social betterment and social service, practical, altruistic, patriotic and humanitarian,—*Lokasangraha*. Such action is desirable, according to the Gita, but behind it must lie the spiritual ideal. And action must be in a spirit of detachment not much concerned with its results (*nish-kama karma*).

"The law of cause and effect holds good under all circumstances, right action must therefore necessarily yield right results, though these might not be immediately apparent."

"There is something in the Gita," adds Nehruji, "which seems to be capable of being constantly renewed, which does not become out of date with the passing of time—an inner quality of earnest inquiry and search, of contemplation and action, of balance and equilibrium in spite of conflict and contradiction. There is a poise in it and a unity in the midst of disparity, and its temper is one of supremacy over the changing environment, not of seeking escape from it but fitting in with it."

"Yet," writes Munshi, "the modern, the so-called educated mind in this Country is a timid mind. It has a sub-conscious feeling, that if it is found relying too often on the Gita, the possessor,—"the arrogant modern"—will be classed with the superstitious, the weak, the out-worn. In fact, it has become a real fear amongst us today. But if this land of ours is to continue its triumphant march to world-influence, this fear must be cast out. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans is said to have written: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." Why should any one be ashamed of the Gospel which Sree Kṛṣṇa taught mankind? No man is ashamed of his learning, of his artistic gifts, or of displaying power, however little it be. Why then should he be ashamed of openly confessing the real source of power, the power which strengthens every one when he is feeble, inspires him when he is weak, upholds him when he is strong?

When all the resources fail, then through the words of the Gita, God speaks to man as unto Arjuna :

क्लृप्त्यं मास्म गमः पार्थ नैतत् त्वय्युपपद्यते ।

क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वेत्तिष्ठ परंतप ॥

(Gita ii-3)

"Yield not to unmanliness,

Unworthy of thee, Pritha's son !

Cast off this mean faint-heartedness !

Arise, rise to the occasion, O scorcher of foes." (Gita ii-3)

Then fear flies, then we recover "ourselves" and like Arjuna each of us can say inspired :

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।

स्थितोऽस्मि गतसंदेहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥

(Gita xviii-73)

"Destroyed is my delusion all, O The Unswerving One,

I have gained wisdom through Thy Grace ;

And I am firm,—my doubts are gone ;

And I will do Thy bidding all."

(Gita xviii-73)

"The more desperate the situation, the greater is the power which the Gita reveals. This has been the experience of the strong, why then should it not be the inspiration of us, the weak ?

"The strength which the Gita gives does not lie on the surface. It lies in real personal power, not like the power of the swordly, in apparent glitter and domination. It is the power that makes every one to whom it comes, a little more of himself. By and through it the weak become strong, the shallow deep, the voluble silent, the insolent humble, the wasted effective. It gives the power of God to every one that believeth ; the power "to arise and win glory, to overcome foes, and to enjoy the affluent kingdom ; a power higher than which no man can covet or gain."

तस्मात्प्रयत्नमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व

जित्वा शत्रून् भुङ्क्ष्व राज्यं समृद्धम् ।

मयेवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव

निमित्तमाग्रं भव मय्यभाचिन् ॥

(Gita xi-33)

"Therefore arise, and win great renown (yashah),

Conquer thy foes, enjoy the affluent kingdom !

By me already all these (your foes) have been slain,—

Be thou the mere instrument, O Arjuna."

(Gita xi-33)

[Man is only an instrument in the hands of God ; that is to say that man is merely a channel through which God's Power flows. As a consequence it behoves man to reconcile his conception of Duty with the Divine Will.]

And what is the nature of the यशः or Glory mentioned above ?

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।

यस्मिन् स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥ (Gita vi-22)

“ Which having gained, he thinketh there  
Is nothing higher to be gained ;  
Wherein established, he is not  
Shaken even by the heaviest of sorrows.” (Gita vi-22)

“ This power which the Gita gives comes not merely to individuals but to communities and nations as well, if they could only translate its message into action.”

The message of the Gita can be summed up in the expression—“ Creative Resistance,” this has two aspects :

(1) Creative concentration ; and (2) The Will to Resist—Resist Selfishness, resist Desire, resist Temptation, resist all evil, for these are our enemies.

This latter aspect is given in the following verse of immortal value :

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।

निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥ (Gita iii-30)

“ Renouncing all actions to Me  
With mind concentrated on the Supreme Self,  
And free from hope and selfishness,  
And mental fever, do thou fight.” (Gita iii-30)

(The mental fever referred to here is the Egoism (*avidya*) or obsession which makes man consider himself, not as an instrument of God but as His agent. Let such a habit of mind be cultivated that one may be keen to do his best and leave the rest to God.)

In other words, Resist non-self with Self, wherever it is and by whatever means, resist it with all the might of your body and soul, not as a matter of calculation, but as a matter of offering unto Him. This is the Message of Gita !

Writes Munshi in this connection: "When in the past foreign hordes overran India the power of the State and the frenzy of religious fanaticism were allied against her. Her freedom, her faith, her culture, her very existence were in peril. Then the message of the Gita gave her power and endurance and the will to resist. We then resisted in the social sphere and turned guilds into castes, families into fortified strength of joint families. We resisted in the religious sphere and produced Bhakti of Srees Chaitanya, Kabir and Guru Nanak, which swept away the angularities of religious intolerance. We resisted in the intellectual sphere and enshrined Samskrit as the Goddess of Learning, as the Mother of everlasting inspiration. We resisted in the political sphere and reduced the power of kings to a mere liberty to quarrel with each other without seriously affecting society and culture.

"*Pax Britannica*, the hypnotic phrase, made us see things as they were not. It weakened India's will to resist. And a new situation found us in difficulties. But the will to resist was expressed through Dayānand Saraswati and Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekānanda, Lokamānya Tilak and Mahātmā Gandhi.

"A man more ferocious than Atilla overspread the world, bringing carnage and slavery to country after country, coming nearer India with every stride. An irresponsible bureaucracy declined our free association, and armed itself with powers, which could stifle the breath of freedom in the country. An ambition to dominate the country or divide it fired a few, making life and property insecure. Western culture—the teeming womb of tanks and dive-bombers—insidiously sapped our spirit. It created dangers we never knew before. We felt helpless; we whined for alien help, we looked in vain on all sides for sympathy. In those days the spirit of the Gita spoken through Gandhiji, and the end of the War saw the end of slavery. But the end of foreign slavery did not bring the era of self-fulfilment; urge to disintegration, lack of will to work, unrighteous race for power, Communism—the Church of human regimentation—are still our foes. The message of the Gita is the Country's only hope. India must dedicate herself to God. She should give up illusory hopes of cheaply earned millennium of Rāma Rājya. She should listen to the Voice of God, and develop the Will to Resist, resist all evil in whatever form it faces us."

Continues Munshi: "Resistance is thus essential to growth, individual or corporate, and if one did not resist, one would become worse than a weed; and Resistance to Non-self is the first step towards the growth of a man's personality. Every minute, when a personality is growing, it becomes something different from what it has been. This incessant development of one's person-

ality, however, is simply the process of being one-self more and more. This "becoming" therefore is a fuller "being."

"I want to be "myself" (*ātmavān*)—that is the supreme desire of every man. It is not a desire to be one's own nude, caveman's self. It is the desire to live a fuller life, to live in a more co-ordinated manner, to develop one's capacities with corresponding enlargement of opportunities. This desire seeks to emphasize, expand and realise all that is in us. It also drives 'us to admire others who possess striking personalities, who are "themselves" in a large measure.

"Unfortunately, most of us try to develop our personality from without, rather than from within. Some dress their hair, others study and modify their voice, manner and appearance; yet others acquire equipment, physical or mental, all with the object of being something more notable and effective. But personality is not the result of possessions, it is the outcome of man becoming more of a person than others, in being a source of inner power."

The greatness of a man is not in what he does, but in what he was and what he has since become. To "be," then, is infinitely higher than to "do." To be thoroughly "one-self" is higher service than serving others. "Ye, therefore, shall be perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect," said Christ in his Sermon in the Mount. To become "perfect"—to realise every minute the Highest in one-self—is the noblest service to fellow-men.

Says the Gītā :—

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी  
ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोऽधिकः ।  
कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी  
तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

(Gita vi-46)

"And greater than the Ascetic he (the Yogi);  
Greater than men of Knowledge too;  
Greater than men of Action still;  
Therefore become a Yogi then, Arjuna." (Gita vi-46)

Also,

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।  
श्रद्धावान् भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥ (Gita vi-47)  
"Of all the yogis he indeed  
Whose inmost soul is merged in Me,  
And full of faith who worships Me  
Is by Me deemed to be the most equipoised." (Gita vi-47)



The greatness of a truly great man lies in his life, not in his deeds. Every man who had met Gandhiji felt that there was something nobler, greater in the man than in anything that he said or did. "Every time one met him one found that he was bigger than his biggest deeds." "What interests the World in Mr. Gladstone is even more what he was than what he did." And it is Milton who said that in order to write well the author ought himself to be a true poem, that he should not "presume to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, *unless he has in himself the experience or practice of all that is praiseworthy.*"

"In the life of every great man we observe the effort with which he struggled against his limitations. We trace the steps by which he rose to become himself, by which he gained freedom, which led to fuller experience of his powers.

"Exclusive devotion to the outward in one shape or the other endangers the inner side of a man, which also gives him strength, courage, beauty and distinction. "What does it profit a man," asked the Prophet of Nazareth, "if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Many gain the world they seek. They also then find to their cost that they have no power to make it their own.

"We may read the Gītā a thousand times and think we have exhausted its meaning, but the next time we go through it we get a new light which we never dreamt of before." The suggestiveness of this wonderful book is really infinite," writes Prof. D. S. Sarma, "if only we begin to interpret it for ourselves in terms of our own experience. No wonder, therefore, that those who feel grateful to this scripture for the solace and guidance it gives them call it their Mother. Mahatmaji once said that he had lost his mother early in life, but that the Gītā took her place. That is really the feeling of every one who has gone to the Gītā in moments of doubt and despair, and sorrow and distress."

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## CHAPTER III

### *The Gita and Spiritual Life.*

#### A

The Gita is an inexhaustible treasure-house of spiritual wisdom. Generations long before us have gathered, as much as they could, sparkling gems of spiritual thought from this great and unique poem, the lustre of which has lighted up their path to life's *summum bonum*, "the one end supremely attainable, namely, the Union with the Divine Being and oneness with the Divine Nature."

यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया ।

यत्र चैवात्मनात्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति ॥ (Gita vi-20)

"Where the mind doth rest in Peace,  
Controlled within the heart by Yoga,  
Where he beholds the soul by soul  
And by the soul is satisfied ;

(Gita vi-20)

सुखमात्यन्तिकं यत्तद् बुद्धिमाद्यमतीन्द्रियम् ।

वेत्ति यत्र न चैवायं स्थितश्चलति तत्त्वतः ॥ (Gita vi-21)

"And where he feels that boundless joy  
That Buddhi grasps beyond the sense,  
Where knowing That, and fixed Therein,  
From Truth he cannot ever change."

(Gita vi-21)

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।

यस्मिन् स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥ (Gita vi-22)

"Which having gained, he thinketh there  
Is nothing higher to be gained ;  
Wherein established, he is not  
Shaken even by the worst misery."

(Gita vi-22)

And countless generations after 'us will attain to Peace and Felicity by following its teaching. It is not without reason that its message has reached distant shores, has given solace and encouragement to many a drooping soul, and has shown the royal road to "That".

The Gita is one of the greatest synthetic works in the long history of Indian spiritual thought. Diverse stream of philosophical knowledge and spiritual discipline commingle and become one in the Gita. This is proved by the fact that all the Acharyas have commented upon it and claimed it as an authority for their philosophy of life. This is not to say, however, that the Gita is eclectic or "exclusive" in its method and conclusion. Its method

is not to take up different theories, examine them and improve upon them where found wanting, and then to absorb them in its own doctrine, for, that would be the method of a text-book of philosophy. But the Gita is an inspired spiritual poem. The truth of the matter is that the teaching of the Gita is so vast and harmonious that the essentials of most other systems of thought and life constitute only partial aspects of it.

For the proper understanding of the scriptures a consideration of three things is essential: the speaker, the person spoken to, and the occasion for the teaching. In the Gita, the speaker is Bhagavan Sree Kṛṣṇa Himself, Arjuna is His close companion (*sakha*) and disciple, and the occasion is the great battle of Kurukshetra.

"There is a way of looking at the Mahabharata as an allegory, and the Gita as only symbolic, that Sree Kṛṣṇa represents The Paramātmān or The Supreme Being, the Antaryāmin, seated in the chariot (Heart) of Arjuna holding the reins of his mind and the whip of inspiration; that Arjuna is the Jeevātman, the human Soul, armed with the bow of Bhakti and arrows of Shakti; that his milk-white steeds are the purified (*sātwik*) senses surrendered unto the Divine Charioteer; that Kurukshetra is the Karma-bhoomi, it is also Dharmakshetra where only 'righteous actions should be performed; Kurukshetra may be taken as the mind and heart of man, in which the Bharata-War is constantly waged until the Rajo-and-Thamo-gunas as of the Kauravas become completely counteracted and Yoga (union with God) established. Dhṛtarashtra is the Ego, which has usurped the kingdom. He is blind, because selfishness is "blind". The sons of the blind king Dhṛtarashtra are the passions—the Rajo- and Thamo-gunas—to be conquered, or the power of evil to be subdued; and the Pāṇḍavas and their army, the pious tendencies and the forces of good favourable to and necessary for liberation."\*

Some of the names of the Warriors cease to be concrete and each represents a basic phenomenon or idea which the root-meaning of the name itself will not fail to reveal. Thus Dronacharya stands for pedantry, Bhishma for family traditions; Bhima represents the out-spoken revolt against evil.

This reading gives the Mahabharata, admittedly one of the three or four greatest epics in the world, a very low place indeed in the realm of poetry and also robs the Gita of much of its force and significance, and also its value for the common man for whom it is primarily intended. We cannot enter here into the question of the historicity of the Kurukshetra battle, but it may be mentioned briefly that great scholars have argued that there are

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\* "Notes on the Gita"—By Dr. M. Shiva Rao, Mangalore.

historical evidences of it. "And the latest archæological excavations at Hastinapura in the Meerut District of the Uttara Pradesh have brought to light a mass of archæological evidence, which throws light on the dark age of Indian History between the end of the Indus Valley Civilisation (2000 B.C.) and the beginning of the early historical times, the 4th Century B.C." This was disclosed by Mr. B. B. Lal, Superintendent of Excavations, Government of India's Archæological Department, speaking at the Bombay Historical Society at the Prince of Wales Museum on 9th April 1951. These Hastinapura Excavations revealed, he said, that in the first period of occupation of Hastinapura, the people used a typical class of painted grey pottery and they did not know the use of iron but only of copper. Similar pottery had also been obtained from almost all the Mahabharata sites such as Mathura, the birth-place of Sree Kṛṣṇa, and the Aghichatra, Capital of North Panchalas (Draupadi's place.) This evidence clearly led to the conclusions that the Mahabharata period might be anywhere between 1000 B.C. and 1500 B.C.

("The Hindu" Madras 12-4-1951).

Moreover, the existence of the ancient fortress of Indraprastha in the suburbs of Delhi, which attracts thousands of tourists annually and which the Author visited in July 1937, is positive proof of the historicity of the Mahabharata War.

The Gita may, however, be said to be symbolic in the sense—that its teaching is universal and its message eternal, and that there is very little in it which is merely local or temporal. (Vide later—Appendix II).

The Gita, in the words of the colophon or formula given at the end of every chapter, is an Upanishad. Thus:

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं सहत् ॥

"All the Upanishads are the cows, Gopal Nandan, the joy of the cowherd, is the milker, Partha the calf, the man of Intellect the enjoyer, and the milk drawn out is the Gitāmrit, the nectar of the Gita."

But the point to be noticed is that it is a layman's Upanishad, as the Mahabharata, of which the Gita forms a part, is a layman's Veda; that is to say, that the teaching of the Gita is intended for all classes of men irrespective of caste or creed; also, it means that the Gita is a fuller scripture than the Upanishads.

In the Upanishads only the last stages of the spiritual journey are taken into account, the earlier stages being pre-supposed; because, the teaching there is intended for those who have qualified themselves for it by the purity of their lives and by their faith in God. The Seeker after Truth in the Upanishads is he who has retired from the world, while the Seeker after Truth in the Gita, who is represented by Arjuna, is a man who is still in the world and who is not yet free from its bonds, he is a novice in spiritual life. Therefore, the Teacher has to begin at the very beginning, with the very a, b, c, of spiritual life. He has to tell the pupil that spiritual life does not mean the abandoning of his duties in the world, but discharging them in a more faithful manner, in a more prayerful spirit and with an entirely different objective. He has to teach him that, though the contemplative life is higher than the life of action, one cannot jump at once to the top of the hill, but must proceed thither by stages. Contemplative life, without a preliminary training of active life, is only a vacuity, if not a delusion and a snare. That is the fundamental teaching of this layman's Upanishad.

The Gita is also a Yoga-shastra, its message is Yoga, its God is Yogeshwara and its ideal man is the Yogi. It cannot be too often repeated that the word "yoga" gives the clue to the whole scripture and that the word is mostly used in its primary sense of "union or fellowship with God," (*yuj*=to join, or "yoke"). And the Gita is called a yoga-shastra, because it teaches the way to that union or fellowship with God. The union has to be achieved through disinterested action, through loving devotion, through intense meditation and through mystic realisation. Accordingly, we have the divisions of yoga into Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Dhyāna-yoga and Jñāna-yoga. It is idle to contend that we have here any fixed number of divisions, or that there are any hard and fast lines between one division and another. "The way is one as God is One, we may divide it into as many parts as we please, just as we may call God by as many names as we please." The way is a natural slope, not an artificial stair-case in which the steps could be counted. The various parts of Yoga can no more be separated from one another than the various functions of the mind can no more be separated from one another. The Gita, at any rate, knows no such separation. It treats yoga, which is the goal as well as the path of religious life as one organic whole, though it dwells now on one aspect and now on another.

Again, it is significant that the Gita is called a yogashastra, and not a Dharma-shastra, although the whole teaching arises out of a doubt regarding Dharma or Duty. Arjuna fears at the outset that by taking part in the war his immemorial Jāti-dharma and Kula-dharma would be destroyed, and tells his Divine Friend

that his mind is perplexed about dharma. But at the end of the whole discourse he says that his "doubts" are cleared and he consents to fight. Here one may ask, "what has happened to the Jāti-dharma and Kula-dharma which Arjuna held so dear?" The fact of the matter is, says Prof. D. S. Sarma,\* that there is an ocean of difference between the conception of dharma which Arjuna starts and the conception of dharma which Bhagavan Sree Krishna reveals to him through His teaching in the Gita. To put it briefly :

"Dharma, which consists only of external rules, without any living connection with yoga or union with God, which is the end of religious life, is a very narrow conception. It is a dharma only for the beginner, the ignorant man. True dharma is that which is in vital connection with yoga. Rules are not ends in themselves. They are only a means to an end. Their utility should always be judged by the degree to which they promote the end. When they cease to promote that end they cease to have any utility. External rules are, no doubt, indispensable in the early stages. But a man who cannot dispense with them at some stage or other, has ceased to grow. All of us require the help of the Teacher in the beginning, but if we require his help throughout, there is undoubtedly something wrong with us. Rules, teachers, institutions and scriptures are only leading strings for the infant soul. But the Gita, which maps out for us the entire course of spiritual life boldly says that freedom from external control is the mark of spiritual adolescence and that all rules of dharma are dissolved in the fruition of yoga. When we have gained the fellowship of God we are free from all rules. In the presence of the king himself his deputies have no authority over us, though they may have helped us to gain entrance into the royal chamber. That seems to be the meaning of the following famous and oft-quoted verse towards the end of the Gita :

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।  
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ (Gita xviii-66)

"Do thou, renouncing dharma's all,  
Take refuge into Me alone ;  
And I will free thee evermore  
From all thy sins ;—so do not grieve." (Gita xviii-66)

*Note.* There is here, however, an apparent conflict which requires an explanation. The Gita impresses the need to follow dharma, and Sree Krishna Himself has said that He has from time

\* The Bhagvad Gita—M.L.J. Press, Mylapore Madras.

to time come down as *avatar* in human form, to restore dharma to its pristine position. Why should He, then, ask Arjuna to lay aside all dharmas?

"Reading the verse as a whole and in the context of the scheme of the Gita, all that is meant is that when a person surrenders himself to God, as Arjuna is asked to do, he is no longer in need of dharmas, because his individuality becomes then merged in the Lord Himself. In such a condition his mind will no more be troubled with the Question, whether a certain course he follows is in agreement with dharma or not as Arjuna was when he was overcome with despondency. Having dropped his ego it is clear he cannot commit any sin. Hence the Lord says: "I will absolve thee from all sins; do not grieve." (M. Subba Rao).\*

The Teacher of the Gita is Sree Krishna, whom the Hindu scriptures declare to be God Narayana Himself. In the Gita He also declares Himself as God. He is the Incarnate Divine, who assuming the body-human, plays a great divine game by adopting the physical, mental and spiritual characteristics of man. Krishna is the Lord of Yoga (Yogeshwara). He is Hrishikesh—One who has conquered his senses. He is a great leader of action and a man of the world; at the same time he is an empire-builder, a fighter, a statesman and a spiritual Teacher—all in one. He is the Perfect man—Purushothama, which is another name for the Embodied Godhead.

The Gita is addressed to Arjuna, a dauntless Warrior, a great man of action, a Karma-yogi a matchless archer (निमिषार्धं धनञ्जयः) who could accomplish things within the twinkling of the eye, things impossible for others, or for which others take much longer time; Arjuna is named "Vijaya," the hero of hundred battles; the reference here is also to the celestial voice that was heard at the time of his birth that he would be the conqueror of the world; he is Dhananjaya, conqueror of wealth (Dhanam also means yuddham (*Dhanam pradhanam yuddham*)). (Amara), and Dhananjaya means conqueror of battles). Arjuna was born of Devendra by invocation and is said to be an incarnation of the sage Nara, who was an ally of the gods. He is *savyasāchi*—ambidextrous, that is to say, he could wield his bow Gāndīva from either shoulder and with equal dexterity. "Arjuna" means "white"—he was so-called as he was of the Satwaguna type, the idea being that certain tints or colours, not of the skin, but of the conscience or *anthahkarana*, are associated with different *gunas*. Arjuna's chariot was white and his horses also white. According to the same principle a Rajasic man is "red"—he being martial, and the

\* Reflections on the Gita—Published in 1949 in Mangalore.

Mars is red (रुधिर), and the Sūdra being Tamasic is "dark." Arjuna is also named Beebatsu (meaning a person with a characteristic dignified pose in facing the enemy and at the same time striking terror into them, also in keeping to his post in warfare. He is "Beebatsu" because he never did anything loathsome. (Dr. V. Raghavan). Arjuna has more than once been referred to in the Gita as "Gudākesa" or Conqueror of sleep.

Conquering of sleep is a quality or accomplishment of great men, men who have made history, such as Bismarck, Napoleon, the great Akbar, all these had only 3 hours' sleep in the 24 hours of the day, but they must have slept intensely. In fact, Napoleon is said to have prided himself on his ability to sleep "at will" and wake up "at will" also. This remarkable capacity is in some cases a natural gift, due, it is said, to their ability to make "mind blank," whereby all extraneous disturbances to sleep, namely, light and noise, were quite ignored. In recent times, we have instances of short sleepers in the great Edison, Poincare and Lloyd George, who have shown that it is possible to sleep little, yet be fit physically and mentally. Nearer home, we have the instance of our Prime Minister, Nehruji, who is said to leave his office-table at 2.30 a.m. and be up again at it at 5 a.m. The secret of these short-sleepers is said to be their physical and mental energy and their arduous love of work, which makes every day seem to be too short. In fact, they compensated in depth or soundness of sleep for what they lacked in duration, and thus the amount of sleep was ample.\*

Arjuna is Sree Krishna's dearest friend (*sakha*). Says Arjuna after seeing His Vishwaroopa :—

"Thinking of Thee as friend, presumptuously,  
If I have called Thee Krishna, yadava, friend,  
Unconscious of Thy Glory that I see,—  
Or carelessly, or fondly in my love : (Gita xi-41)

And if in spirit I have not honoured Thee,  
At play, reposing, sitting, or at meals,—  
Alone, or else with others,—I implore,—  
Forgive my error, O Thou Boundless One." (Gita xi-42)

Arjuna is Partha, being the son of Pritha (another name of Kunthi, Arjuna's mother) who is the sister of Vasudeva, the father of Sree Krishna who is therefore, named Vāsudeva. Arjuna is thus a near relative of Sree Krishna, hence their mutual relation must be free and frank, and the emotion that Arjuna entertains for

\* Towards a Happier Life—By Dr. M. A. Kamath, M.B. & C.M. II Edn. P. 47 (Taraporiwalas Bombay).



his Divine Friend and charioteer (*sārathi*) must be love and not awe. Other epithets of Arjuna are :—

Jishnu, the Victorious ;

Kireeti, one wearing a kirita or diadem presented to him by his father by invocation, Devendra—who is also known as Pākashāsana. Arjuna is therefore named Pākashāsani, being the son of Pākashāsana. Arjuna is also known as Kapidwaja, one whose banner bears an emblem of Hanuman (Ānjaneya).

Arjuna is particularly fit to receive the teaching of the Gita, for one who has not shown, developed and tested his abilities and heroism in the World of action cannot properly receive its message. But rather one who has taken up a great work, the accomplishment of which presents great obstacles, one who has acquired spiritual power and energy in trying to succeed in one's great mission in life; to such a one, God reveals the Knowledge for the successful end and consummation of the work. Arjuna is pre-eminently such a man. He has for long satisfied the Rajasic tendencies of a Kshatriya prince, yet he has through supreme self-control subordinated his normal *vrittis* (duty as a Kshatriya) to high *sātvic* ideals and has made them sattwa-directed. He is a generous foe, a great lover, a lieutenant with the tender heart of a child and is the typical Kshatriya hero.

Arjuna enters the battle-field happy and confident. But at the most critical moment of his life his spirit is depressed and his intellect confused by the conflicting teachings of the different scriptures. He cannot decide about the norm of conduct to be followed and so approaches Sree Krishna, his *sārathi* (charioteer) for guidance. He takes refuge in the Lord and prays to be enlightened. The Divine Friend becomes the Divine Master. Arjuna is the representative man of his age and typical of the human soul "in agony athirst for Light and Illumination."

The situation in which the Gita is spoken is the terrible holocaust, was of wholesale sacrifice or destruction, of Kurukshetra. Two mighty armies are arrayed against each other sombre (dismal or depressing) war-music is being played, great conch-shells have been sounded, even when the missiles are about to be hurled (*pravṛtṭi-shastrasampātē*), just at this moment the hero of the whole action loses heart and refuses to fight. The sitting and the situation are highly significant. The teaching of the Gita has a direct bearing upon a great practical crisis in the application of ethics and spirituality in human life. A great body of profoundest teachings must have for its occasion an extraordinary happening or crisis of deep suggestion and hazardous difficulty which

cannot be governed sufficiently well by the normal standards of thought and action. The Author of Gita, reminds us again and again of the situation from which the teaching arises ; He returns to it prominently not only at the end but also in the middle of the deepest philosophical discussion.

Thus, the Gita is not the scripture of the world-shunning ascetic, but of the practical man in spiritual distress who is sincere, and earnest to get Divine guidance. It is the layman's unfailing light-house in the dark night of the soul when he is drifting like a rudderless ship in the tumultuous sea of life. According to the Gita, Union with God comes not only in the peace and calm of a hermitage but also in the midst of mundane life (life of this world). The Light illumines, the sweet and powerful voice is heard, not only in the quiet of a mountain retreat but in the din and bustle of every-day existence and as in Arjuna's case, in a bloody battle-field.

A crisis like that of Arjuna is not an infrequent incidence in our daily life. We are constantly afflicted by doubt and depression, are at a loss to know the real values of life and to decide on the means of realising them. These are the moments when we most need spiritual guidance. The Voice of God alone can help us and not the vanity of intelligence and genius that we call " Knowledge."

प्राप्ते वै संनिहिते मरणे  
नहि नहि रक्षति दुःखं करणे ।

(Sri Sankara)

Compare

" Verily, when the day of judgment comes, we shall not be asked what we have read, but what we have done " (Thomas a Kempis,—*" Imitation of Christ "*)

Let us therefore search our own Heart and try to listen to the Voice of the Lord, the Antaryāmirupa seated therein. Let us approach Him with all humility and reverence and accept Him as the Divine Teacher. Let us tell Him like Arjuna :

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः  
पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसंमूढचेताः ।  
यन् श्रेयः स्यात् निश्चितं मद्भि तन्मे  
शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥

(Gita II-7)

" My heart's overcome with taint of helplessness,  
My mind's confused—not knowing what is right ;  
I ask Thee, tell me, what is best for me ;  
Teach me, Thy pupil—O my Refuge Thou." (Gita II-7)

Arjuna was here at the parting of the ways, and "to fight or not to fight, that was the question." In this connection the great Tilak compares and contrasts the two characters, Arjuna and Shakespeare's Hamlet. The latter, he says, not being in contact with God could not satisfactorily deal with the question, "To be or not to be" and is crushed in the conflict. Whereas Arjuna is led by the Kindly Light through the mazes of life to Moksha, the ultimate aim and end thereof.

The Inner Guide is sure to show us the path ! In fact, He has already, even outwardly, spoken the word. The Gita is a great solace, help and path-finder, and what is the Gita but the living word of the Incarnate Divine, who is also the Friend and Master of all Creation ?

The problem of the Gita is to show a way by which a life of action can be reconciled with a life in God. It is true that Arjuna, as a practical man wanted only a clear-cut direction as to his duty, a definite principle according to which he should conduct himself. But the problem of duty is very deep, complex and perplexing—*gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*. (Gita IV—17.) Spirit being the fundamental Reality, life can only be its manifestation. Truth of life depends on the truth of the source of life. A problem in life must ultimately have a spiritual solution. "It is only by a change of consciousness that the true basis of life can be discovered ; from within outwards is indeed the rule. But within does not mean some quarter inch behind the surface. One must go deep and find the Soul, the Self, the Divine Reality within us. We must stand back and seek the Light within till we discover and build the God-head within and without us." (Aurobindo). It is only natural, therefore, that Sree Krishna's answer to Arjuna's demand for a definition and direction of duty covers almost the whole range of spiritual philosophy and gives a spiritual solution.

We shall see later that the Gita does not teach, as it is commonly held, the disinterested performance of duties but the following of the Divine Life by abandoning all dharma and taking refuge in God alone ; that is to say, a complete Sharanāgati or submission to His Will. (*Vide* under "Sharanāgathi." Ch. VII.)

"The Gita is not a book of practical ethics, but of the Spiritual life !"

[Chief Ref :—Sri Arabinda Basu, M A. in the Gita—Tattwa.]

B

It is true that normally Desire is the spring of action, it is *Vāsanā* of the previous birth that gives rise to Karma, and Karma in its turn gives rise to *Vāsanā*, the mechanism of *samskāra* and *vṛtti* being the middle of the process. It is a vicious circle. It is also true that freedom from desire is essential for the spiritual aspirant. But, says the Gita, want of that freedom is not due to karma as such, but to our egoism and to our sense of agency—*Ahankāra Vimoodhātmā kartāham iti manyate* (Gita III—27), that is to say:—"The unwise man whose mind is completely deluded by the feeling of "I" in respect of this body, or in other words, deep-rooted self-identification with the same, thinks "I am the doer. But it is possible to be free from the clutches of egoism, which is an instrument of the lower nature and not of our true self. We being essentially divine the real foundation of our existence is above nature. While the external man is like a tree "earth-bound and heaven-amorous," the real man has his root in heaven and has branched downwards. We must know that actions are entirely done by the Modes of Nature—*prakṛteḥ Kriyamānāni gunaiḥ karmāni sarvaśah* (Gita III—27). "All actions are being performed by the Modes of Prakṛiti (Primordial Matter). Here is the necessity of realising the Akshara-Purusha, the immutable silent witness (*karmasākshi*) of the workings of nature, unperturbed and unaffected, of becoming *trigunātita*, (above the three modes of nature instead of being subject to them). Hence also is the utility of knowledge which liberates us from false identification with the movements of Nature.

The first discipline that the Gita teaches for this realisation is the renunciation of the fruits of action—"You have a right to action, but only to action, never to its fruits" (Gita II—47)—and surrendering them to God, the Master of Work, as sacrifice. But later the Gita says that we have not only no right to fruits of action but not even to action itself. That also has to be dedicated to God and we have to look upon ourselves as instruments in His hands and not as His agents. The resulting detachment from what are really currents of nature, but which we wrongly ascribe to ourselves, culminates in the knowledge of our Self as something permanent, detached and self-gathered.

But this is not the highest and complete realisation—the consummation of our spiritual life, according to the Gita. *Puruṣottama* is the Integral Reality and That has to be seen in everything and in every being, simultaneously with seeing everything and every being in Him. Says the Gita :

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।  
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥

(Gita vi-30)

"Who seeth Me in everything  
And everything within Me seeth  
I am never lost to him  
And he is never lost to Me."

(Gita vi-30)

This "Me" here is the Purushottama and Sree Krishna clearly speaks of loving Him. This "constant living in God-consciousness" and loving Him in all beings is the crown of the Yoga of the Gita. Love and Devotion to the Divine is the supreme teaching of our Scripture.

(God is omnipresent. If we could really feel His presence everywhere and at every time we are changed entirely. It is a sublime vision, if we could have it, by seeing Him always with us and by feeling that he is seeing us.)

Thus are synthesised the three ways of Karma, Jnana and Bhakthi. According to Sri Aurobindo,\* the first step is Karma-yoga, the selfless sacrifice of works. The second is Jñānayoga, the self-realisation and knowledge of the true nature of the world, and here the insistence is on Knowledge. But the sacrifice of works continues and the path of works become one with, but does not disappear into the path of, Knowledge. The last is Bhakti-yoga, adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Being, and here the insistence is on Devotion; but the Knowledge is not subordinated but only raised, vitalised and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues, the double path becomes the triune way of knowledge, work and devotion."

(Vide Appx. II-A).

And what is the fruit of the sacrifice that the seeker gets? It is the one and supremely attainable—"Union with the Divine Being and Oneness with the Divine Nature"—the *summum bonum* of life referred to above.

### C

#### Non-violence

It is supposed by some critics—obviously ignorant of the mysteries of spiritual matters—that Sri Krishna could not ask Arjuna to take arms and fight, because that militates against their moral sense. These critics prefer to take the whole matter of the Gita as an allegory and thus want to save Krishna and the Gita from moral depravity! But we said in the beginning that the Gita is a scripture of the spiritual life, and anybody who knows anything about spirituality knows that it goes far beyond ethics; and

\* Essays on the Gita.

that is why its expression in the affairs of the World is not bound to be what ordinary men consider to be moral.

Non-violence means non-injury. It is, however, not a negative concept but a positive one. It indicates—atleast should indicate—not only the absence of immoral tendencies to harm our fellow-beings but also the presence of universal love. Non-violence is a matter of inner consciousness and not of outer behaviour. Now, is non-violence a spiritual principle or merely moral? In other words, is non-violence a natural result of spiritual realisation or only an ethical discipline to be practised as a preliminary to such realisation? If it is the former, that is, a spiritual principle, it is obvious that only a person of genuine spiritual realisation can develop it. Freedom from egoism and passion and non-attachment—these are essential for genuine spiritual realisation, in which, as has been already pointed out “everything is actually seen as God and in God, and also God in and as everything.” Transcendence of the natural order of things is both a presumption and a natural corollary of self-realisation and God-Union.

And, therefore to a Yogi Nature is an open book and he knows the essential principles of her working. And what is Nature but the external executive force of the Supreme Will? A Yogi knows that Nature works through apparent opposites, the principle of strife and struggle is as much an instrument of Nature as that of love and association. Sree Krishna reveals Himself to Arjuna as TIME, the Destroyer and Lord of Death :

कालोऽस्ति लोकक्षयकृत् प्रवृद्धो

लोकान् समार्हुमिव प्रवृत्तः ।

ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे

येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ॥

(Gita xi-32)

“Death am I, Destroyer of the Worlds,  
Made manifest on earth to slay mankind,  
Even without thee, Know these warriors all,  
Arrayed in hostile ranks, shall cease to be.”

(Gita xi-32)

So that the Yogi will see the self-same God's Power in all movements of Nature, because Unity is his vision. And if he is a Karma-yogi, participating in God's play in the world he will not shrink from slaughter and bloodshed in order to save his skin or himself from nervous shock or to satisfy his moral sensibility. Morality represents a stage of duality, a struggle between the actual and the ideal. But the Karma-yogi gifted with the vision of unity knows ideals and actuals to be lower reflections of the Real; he also knows that through the actualities of Nature, however apparently contradictory to the ideals, these latter are realised. Nature's ways cannot be comprehended by man's puny intellect and her

onward march does not stop in deference to his touchy and unenlightened morality.

If, on the other hand, non-violence is only an ethical formula, it cannot have a universal application. Morality is determined by many factors like the station in life and mental constitution of the agent, the development and capacities of his nature, and the situation in which he is placed. Ahimsa is a great ideal, but Hindu teachers have never committed the mistake of making any ethical ideal and discipline imperative for everybody. They have always believed in, and recommended, graded ideals and conformably with them, in progressive practices. What is permissible for a responsible and peaceful citizen of the society with a developed social conscience is forbidden for a robber. But the converse also is true. What is good for the robber is not necessarily good for the ethically more developed family-man with responsibilities towards his family, who does not go out of his way to assault others. Therefore, when he is assaulted, he has every right to defend himself against the aggressive adversary; and if successful defence necessitates the killing of the aggressor, no sin attaches to the defendant who has been wronged. On this point, all Aryan Teachers are unanimous including the Buddha, the Prophet of Maitri and Karuna, and Chaitanya, the Prophet of Prema.

It is pointed out that to change the heart of the evil-doer a supreme sacrifice has to be made. This is a dangerous doctrine, because it makes people responsible for what is not their job. My business is not to perfect others, but to perfect myself. Who am I to change other people's heart when I am myself ignorant and bound? And where is the power by which I shall perform the miracle? Conversions, of course, do take place and they are the reminders of the power of spiritual love. But how many spiritual geniuses are there among us? Perhaps one in a million.

Thus, as a moral principle, non-violence has no universal application and, as a spiritual principle, in the sense of absolute refusal to use physical force under all circumstances, it has no validity. A day will come when strife and fight will cease to be instruments of Nature—and it is the bounden duty of all right-thinking and right-acting persons to work towards that end, but let us not forget in the meantime that evil cannot perish unless those that thrive on evil also perish.

We do not mean that the Gita is a gospel of War and Violence. What we desire to emphasize is that "for the Karma-yogi" there is no duality; and if necessary, if so willed by God, even in the battle-drums he can hear the flute of Sree Kṛṣṇa.

(Chief ref: Aravinda Basu, M.A., in the *(Gita-Tatwa)*)

## D

*When does war become a Duty?* It is often said that the Gita, in spite of its greatness in several other respects, does not deserve to be taken as an authoritative text or scriptural guide in respect of man's moral conduct, in as much as the very first thing it teaches, as unto Arjuna, is that war is good and that the slaughter of men in battle is right, while it is everywhere else clearly recognised to be the function of religion and morality to enforce the lessons of *Ahimsa* (Mercy and Charity and Love) in respect of all human relations. As we proceed with the study of the Gita it will become clear that the Gita itself enforces these lessons of *ahimsa* with great emphasis and decisiveness. But the lessons of mercy and charity and Love cannot radically contradict the obligations of the duty of war, whenever war does really become a duty; moreover, the *kripa*, or mercy which actuated Arjuna in this situation was not, as we may easily see, free from the taint of selfishness. Mercy and charity and love, even when selfishly exercised do good; even then they are certainly twice-blessed, "blessing him that gives and him that takes." But it has to be distinctly borne in mind that that kind of Mercy or Charity or Love, which has a selfish motive behind its manifestation is decidedly low in its character; for owing to its association with selfishness, it is apt to lead us often along wrong paths, so as to prevent us from making, at the call of duty, the larger and the more completely unselfish sacrifice. It may thus become hard for us to exhibit in our lives that nobler kind of genuinely disinterested mercy and charity and love which is enjoined by all true religions and which alone is capable of bestowing on the soul of man the salvation of everlasting freedom and blissfulness.

To love one's own wife and children and kindred is in every way worthy and honourable, and the man who shows himself to be incapable of even this amount of love does not deserve to be a man at all. He is worse than many beasts. But, the worthiness as well as the value of one's love of kindred disappears as soon as one's attachment to wife and children and other relatives hinders the further expansion of the heart and checks the larger growth of sympathy and unselfish love. Without this larger love and wider charity none is fit to live the life of a really great man. The mercifulness of Arjuna in relation to his kindred is, in this situation, in conflict with the proper performance of his duties as a soldier, as a Kshatriya hero and warrior. It is for this reason that Sree Krishna looks upon it as a weakness. No worthy soldier ought to turn away, we have seen, from a war (*dharma yuddha*) in which truth (or righteousness), justice and the progress of humanity are not at stake, and that love of kindred or mercifulness to friends and relations, which induces a soldier to slip away,



"turning his back to the holy battle-field" of such a war, does not at all deserve to be commended as a true and valuable virtue. Wars are even now the final arbiters of justice. That there is a Power, higher than human wisdom and human heroism, which determines the results of wars and the consequent character of the march of human civilization is an idea which should constantly be borne in upon the mind of all thoughtful and philosophic students of history. "Divine Providence seems to have been seated on the edge of the killing sword in all great battles known to human history; indeed the fighting human armies have been only instruments in the hands of God."

The inevitableness of war imposes on man the duty of war, and whenever war does become a duty, there is to the soldier no escape from having to fight it out. Therefore it is nothing other than weakness and vacillation (or wavering) for a warrior to allow himself to be deterred from doing his duty in war, even if he does so under the influence of genuine love and sincere sympathy for his own friends and relations. One can judge in this light whether Arjuna's mercy was really misplaced or not.

There is indeed no doubt that the feeling of mercy with which Arjuna became overpowered just before the commencement of the war, was considered by Sree Krishna to be misplaced and unworthy. That such a feeling of mercy is really misplaced, can be established by examining in a spirit of fairness the question of the place of war in the evolution of human civilisation. War ought to be avoided, whenever it can be avoided; but when it cannot be avoided, he that has to fight out its battles ought to be, under no circumstances, allowed to decline to do his duty. When Arjuna was thus overcome by the feeling of misplaced mercy in relation to his enemies, and declined to fight against them like a true Kshatriya hero and warrior Sree Krishna did not say to Arjuna that he was acting rightly, but on the other hand, He earnestly endeavoured to impress on the mind of Arjuna that he was in duty bound to fight. Indeed Sree Krishna ultimately succeeded in convincing the unwilling warrior that through unselfish fighting alone, he could do his duty in life and thereby accomplish much good unto himself and unto the community of which he was a note-worthy and responsible member."

(Chief ref:—*Lectures on the Gita*—Prof. Rangachariar, Madras.

E

Then, how is it that the idea that the religion of the Hindus enjoin asceticism, renunciation and passivity, has gained any

currency at all? In the religious scriptures of the Hindus two different paths of life are taught: one of these paths goes by the name of Pravrittimarga and the other goes by the name Nivrittimarga.\* The first is the path of active life of aggressive achievement, while the second is the path of Renunciation and retirement. As a matter of fact, in the early days of the organisation of what is known as the Varnāśrama Dharma in this Country, every man was expected to follow at different times both these paths of life. At one particular stage of life he was called upon to follow the pravritti marga, and at another particular stage to follow the nivrittimarga. As a Brahmachari or Vedic student and also as a *grihastha* or householder he was expected to follow the pravritti marga of action and of social obligation as taught in the Hindu religious books known as the *smritis*.

After having lived the life of the student and the householder, and discharged well the onerous responsibilities and obligations attached to those two conditions of life, and after having enjoyed all that is good and worthy in life and having at the same time understood the snares and pitfalls of life as well as its numerous great privileges, the ancient Hindu was called upon to retire from the world of action and achievement to adopt the nivritthi marga or the path of renunciation. Hence in the later stages of his life he had to renounce its privileges and responsibilities and retire into the forest (*vānaprastha*) so as to spend the rest of his life there in contemplation and complete peace, thinking of the great problem of life and of the universe with the help of the experience that he has already gained as Brahmachari and as Grihastha. Such was the order of life planned of old in Hindu Society; and out of it came naturally into existence a collection of very valuable religious literature which laid greater stress upon retirement and renunciation than upon the hard-fought achievements of the life of action and endeavour. The life of aggressive achievements came to be considered as inferior mainly on account of its snares and pitfalls; and the achievements themselves could not in the life of retirement, appear to be of any real value in enabling one to obtain the coveted salvation of the soul. The life of attachment is easier for man than the life of renunciation and non-attachment; and this comparative ease of the former kind of life has naturally raised the value of the latter kind. Thus perhaps arose the popular temperament inclined to pay more respect and attention to retirement and renunciation than to achievement and action. Almost every one of the important Upanishads has some amount of thought directed to the teaching that renunciation and selflessness are better than achievement and attachment.

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\* Refer here: "Hinduism and Modern Science" by The Author.

## CHAPTER IV

### KARMA-YOGA

#### I

Says the Lord :

“Thy duty is to act alone,  
And not to seek its fruits at all,  
Seek not the fruit of action thou ;  
Nor to inaction be attached.” (Gita ii-47)

“In Yoga established, do thy deeds,  
Renouncing all attachment thou ;  
The same in failure and success ;  
This even-ness is known as Yoga.” (Gita ii-48).

“This message of the Gita,” says Gandhiji, “inculcates in us the duty of perseverance in the face of seeming failures. It teaches us that we have a right to action only, but not to the fruits thereof, and that success and failure are one and the same at bottom. It calls upon us to dedicate ourselves body, mind and soul to pure duty and not to become mental voluptuaries (given to luxuries and sexual pleasures) at the mercy of chance-desires and undisciplined impulses.”

“And the consummation wished for by the Ideal Karma-Yogin of the Gita is that through love and service he may attain ultimate fellowship with God. The Kingdom of Heaven conceived by the Gita is not a realm of pure (mystical) experience unconnected with concrete human relationship. It is not an un-earthly conceptual realm but a just and happy social order. Its stress is on faith, as well as good works. Faith without an active moral life is vacuous and inadequate.”

“The Gita stands for an active moral life. It asks us to accept the very challenge of life. Every challenge in life according to the Author of the Gita is at once a crisis and an opportunity. It has no secret message which absolves man from active moral life. Flight from life into retreats is deprecated and formal renunciation is condemned in severe terms.\*

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\* Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao, M.A., D. Litt. “The Bhagavad Gita and the Changing World, with a foreword by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.—The New Order Book Co., Ellis Bridge, Ahmedabad.”

Act we must and under no circumstances should we cease from action, and while acting we should not be prompted by the desire for the fruit of the act, it should be *nishkāma karma*. Disinterested activity gives us the necessary equanimity for the efficient performance of our duty. Constant pre-occupation with the desire for the fruit of our activities is likely to bind us to what is right, but it might often make us also swerve from the path of rectitude. Hence the Gita advocates renunciation of the fruit of the action as the necessary step for the equanimity of the mind and efficient execution of our works.

A question naturally arises here, namely, "if self-interest and desire for the fruit of action are to be given up, what should take their place? The Gita-answer to this question is that we must dedicate our actions to God. It is not duty for duty's sake, it is duty as a divine offering, flowing from one's own nature (*Swabhāva*). Self-interest and desire for the fruit of action are to be purged completely.

The above principle of the philosophy of Activism as taught by the Gita was evidently borrowed from the *Īsopanishad*. It establishes beyond doubt the indebtedness of the Gita to the *Upānishads* in general.

The second point of connection between the *Īsopanishad* and the Gita is that though there are some passages in the Gita referring to self-realisation, we find the doctrine of self-realisation almost in its full-fledged form in the *Īsopanishad*. It is indeed far higher in realisational value than the Gita. (Ranade)\*

(*Vide Appx. II*).

Karma-yoga means union with God through a life of disinterested service to the world. It involves the renunciation not only of the fruit of action but also of the self-centred motive and independent agency of action. The Karma-yogi always works as the agent of God for the welfare of the world. By removing his own will and the external fruit of action he reaps a hundred-fold in the internal kingdom of Spirit by the fulfilment of the Divine Will.

Karma-yoga starts with the full utilisation of man's own natural endowments and his place in society—his *swabhāva* and *swadharma*—and ends, with the full co-operation with God's own purpose. It thus lifts man above the region of the Law of Karma, which lays down that all self-centred action of an individual must have their just retribution in the lives to come.

\* The Bhagavad Gita, as a Philosophy of God-realisation.—By Dr. R. D. Ranade, M.A., D.Litt. Published by the Nagpur University in April 1959.

The great example of Karma-yoga is Iswara Himself, who incessantly works in Nature, creating, maintaining and destroying various forms of life, and providing the necessary environments for them, *though He has nothing to gain for Himself by all this activity.* (Gita iii-22)

Incessant activity and Eternal rest are reconciled together in God, who is the greatest Karma-yogi. In man too, when his Karma-yoga is in full blossom Undisturbed Peace, will shine through all his action.\*

The Gita, however, enjoins an active moral life for social betterment even on those who have attained perfection. The Lord has "taken upon Himself the bonds of Creation" though he has no purpose to serve. It is incumbent on men of wisdom to lead an active moral life, to serve as models for others. If men of wisdom lapse into inaction, the "lesser breeds without the law" will imitate them with formidable results.

So, an active moral life with devout frame of mind is the "Central Message of the Gita."

The Karma-yogi is, however, warned not to take upon himself the role or career of another, who is of a different temperament however attractive it may be. Says the Gita :

"Better one's Dharma incomplete,  
Than other's Dharma well performed ;  
By acting as our nature calls,  
We do not any sin incur."† (Gita xviii-47)

Thus, we see one must give up the desire for fruits of the activity and dedicate it to the Lord. One must not give up any activity, nor take up the activity that does not belong to him. He must act for the purification of the Self and the good of Society.

## 2

Karma-yoga is ordinarily taken to mean a moral discipline necessary for the purpose of *Chit-shuddhi*, purification of mind and heart. It consists, as mentioned above, of renunciation of the fruits of action and then of action itself, surrendering them to God, the Master of works as sacrifice and attaining freedom from the sense of agency or doer. In this view, the function of Karma is only preliminary. But the true import of Karma-yoga in the Gita is the work done after union with the Supreme Self as His

\* Prof. D. S. Sarma, M.A., The Bhagavad Gita, M.L.J. Press, Mylapore, Madras-4.—† See later—Chapter IV, No. 3.

instrument. Karma-yoga is not merely a moral effort but a spiritual fruition, not only a beginning but also a consummation. The Gita definitely makes enlightened work not merely a supremely potent means of God-union but also the expression of such union. In fact, our Scripture, though recognising the way of *sannyasa*, of outward physical renunciation of life and action, prefers action to inaction. Says the Gita :

न कर्मणामनारंभात् नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।

न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥

(Gita iii-4)

"By not performing actions, none  
Freedom from actions can obtain,  
Nor ever can perfection gain  
By mere renunciation he."

(Gita iii-4)

And the command has been given to Arjuna, thus :

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय ।

सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

(Gita ii-48)

"In Yoga established do thy deeds  
Renouncing all attachment thou ;  
And even-tempered in failure and success,  
This evenness of temper is known as Yoga."

(Gita ii-48)

It is needless to say that one cannot become *yogastha* unless one is completely detached, fully free from attachment of any kind. But what is this detachment that Sree Krishna speaks of? It is not only the detachment from particular objects of desire but also from psychological preferences and aversions. For in the previous verse Sree Krishna, after telling Arjuna that he has no right to the fruits of action, and therefore not to make fruits of works his motives, emphatically says:

मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि

(Gita ii-47)

"Let there be not in you any attachment to inactivity."

(Gita ii-47)

Because action is needed even for the maintenance of the body.

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्य अकर्मणः ।

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्धयेत् अकर्मणः ॥

"Perform all necessary acts ;  
More than inaction Action's great ;  
Nor can thy body's barest needs  
Without some action be supplied."

(Gita iii-8)

"Work is the inevitable condition of human life,  
the true source of human welfare." (Tolstoi).

Thus detachment from action does not mean attachment to inaction. On the contrary, the Yogi will see The One in all pairs of opposites (*dvandwa-s*)—in friend and foe, love and hatred, gain and loss, victory and defeat, honour and dishonour, action and inaction. For, *samatwam yoga uchyate*—it is even-mindedness that is meant by Yoga (Gita ii-48). In fact, it is the liberated Yogi who has any karma worth the name, and not ordinary people being driven intermittently by the hurrys of Nature. We have seen above that the Yogi not only realises unity with God, but also oneness with His Nature. And since Sree Krishna of Himself says :

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।  
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्ते एव च कर्मणि ॥ (Gita iii-22)

"Nothing have I, O Pritha's son,  
In all the three worlds to perform,  
Nothing to gain I have not gained  
And yet in action I engage." (Gita iii-22)

The devotee who has love and devotion for God and exalts himself to the divine nature will not want to retire from His cosmic play, though that possibility is open to the Yogi, but he will become a *nimitta*, a mere instrument in His hands for the great purpose of holding together the peoples, or, it may be, for any other purpose that God may be fulfilling in the world.

Here the question may be asked—"Why should the Yogi who has no desire or ambition, work?" This question arises from the wrong notion, that desire alone can be the motive of work. True, the Yogi has no personal desire; but that is precisely why he can identify his will with the Supreme Will. And when one is propelled to work by desire, but inspired to work by God's example then alone may one be said to work. Not the Nature-driven but the God-appointed is truly a worker. "Free from desire and attachment, one with all beings, living in the infinite Truth and Purity, and out of the profoundest depth of his inner being, governed by his immortal, Divine and highest Self, all his works will be directed by the Power within through that essential nature in us, which knowing, warring, working, loving, serving is always Divine, towards the fulfilment of God in this World." (Aurobindo). While on the ethical level there are works and works, on the spiritual level, in the Yoga of divine works, there is no distinction between works. All works (*Sarvakarmāni*) can be done as a

sacrifice to the Lord and Master of works. From the other side, God can appoint His devotees to any work, however undivine it may seem to the half-blind knowledge of man. It is not the work that matters but the spirit behind it, which determines, its character. Sree Krishna clearly says to Arjuna :

तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।

मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मा मे वैष्यस्य संशयम् ॥

(Gita viii-7)

"Therefore do thou at all times

Remember Me alone, and fight,

With mind and Buddhi fixed on Me

Thou wilt come to Me without a doubt."

(Gita viii-7)

Fighting and bloodshed is not unspiritual and undivine necessarily. On the other hand, a perfect devotee, free from egoism and the sense of agency—*Kartāhamii*—and knowing that all initiative for work comes ultimately from the Supreme Worker, who is in constant union with God and shares in His work as only an instrument (*nimittamātram*), will be equally at home—and his home is divine consciousness—in crowd and solitude, in a battlefield or in a *Sāntarasāspadam Āsramam*. No difference can remain for him who sees the One in all beings and becomings, whose vision of equality cannot be clouded by the seemingly contradictory nature of the pairs of opposites.

This naturally raises the topical Problem of Non-violence. (*Vide Chapter III-C=ante*).

### 3

*Sacredness of duty.*—The Gita contains the essence of "Being and Living" according to the Hindu belief. The message of the Gita is a message to the ordinary man, and through Arjuna the Lord speaks to humanity at large. Its central theme is that of abiding peace, of ways to seek stillness in the Centre of storm "that is life." For the elect, there is the Path of Eternal Salvation—the deliverance of man from the Cycle of Births and Deaths (*Samsāra* or *Samsriti*).

When Arjuna saw men arrayed on both sides for mutual slaughter, he was deeply agitated, and Bhagavan Sree Krishna spoke to him in order to quell his agitation and remove his doubts. Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna at this juncture is the Bhagavad Gita, which is enshrined in the millions of hearts to-day as the "Word of God," and is acknowledged by all as one of the



supreme treasures of human literature. Its gospel of "Devotion to Duty without attachment or desire of reward" has shown the way of life for all men, learned or ignorant, who have sought for *light in the dark problems of life*.

The Gita is not a theoretical treatise but a practical guide for everyman in every doubtful and difficult situation (*dharma-sankata*).

Regarding the performance of one's duties the Gita lays down :

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ (Gita xviii-46)

"Man attains to highest perfection by worshipping through his own natural duties, Him from whom the tide of creation has streamed forth and by whom all this universe is pervaded." Thus, the burden of the entire Song Celestial is to perform one's own duty, for, in the performance of actions dissociated from their fruits lies the worship of the Lord. Let us therefore resign ourselves to Him and do our duties allotted to us. That is the Key to the Realisation of Perfection.

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात् ।

स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन् न आप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥ (Gita xviii-47)

"Our own duty though defective is better than that of another, well performed. A person doing his duty, prescribed according to his nature, does not incur sin." (Gita xviii-47)

That is to say, the work of every one should be respected. The greatness does not lie in this work or that. It lies in the heart of the worker. For example, sweeping of streets may generally be considered a low work, but it is not so if done with as much love and sincerity as that of a Municipal Secretary, for no work is inferior to another. Both the sweeper and the secretary will enjoy the peace of mind and will be held equally good in the eye of God, if they discharge their duties well and without attachment to their fruits (B. N. Khanna).\*

The occupation may be one he is born to in society, or it may have been forced upon him by circumstances, or he may have taken it by choice, but what really matters is the spirit of sincerity and faithfulness with which he does his life's work. Maharshi Vedavyāsa, the author of the Mahabharata emphasizes this great Truth by making a scholarly Brahmana who did not know it, learn from a butcher—Dharma-Vyādhya—who lived it in his humble and despised life. The story runs thus :

\* The Lights of the Gita S. Chand & Co., Fountain—Delhi.

Once Sage Mārkaṇḍeya went to see the Pandavas during their *vanavas* in the Kamyaka forest. Dharmaputra (Yudhisthira) happened to talk of the virtues and sense of duty of the fair sex—*pativrata dharma*—and said:

“What greater wonder is there in this world than the patience and the chastity of woman? She gives birth to a child after cherishing it in her womb as dearer than life itself. She brings it into the world in pain and anxiety and thenceforward her one thought in life is for its health and happiness. Large-hearted and forgiving, a woman forgives and continues to love even a wicked husband, who neglects and hates and subjects her to all sorts of miseries. How strange.”

Hearing this Mārkaṇḍeya tells Dharmaputra a second story: The Story of Dharma-Vyādha: There was a Brahmana by name Kausika, who observed his vow of Brahmacharya with great steadfastness and devotion. One day while sitting under a tree for meditation a crane perched on the tree defiled his head with its droppings. He looked up at it and his angry look killed the bird and it fell down dead. Kausika was pained when he saw the dead bird lying on the ground.

In this connection, writes Rajaji,\* “How frightful it would be if wishes fulfilled themselves, if each hasty or angry wish took effect at once! How much there would be to regret or repent afterwards! It is lucky for man that wishes depend on outward circumstances for accomplishment, since that saves him from much sin and sorrow.”

Kausika sorrowed that the evil thought that passed in his mind in a moment of anger had killed an innocent bird. Some time later he went as usual to beg alms. He stood before the door of a house to receive his dole. The house-wife was cleaning utensils at that time and Kausika waited in the hope that she would attend to him after her work was over. In the meantime her husband returned home tired and hungry, and she had to attend to his wants, wash and dry his feet and serve him with food. All this meant so much of time and Kausika was still waiting for his dole. Evidently she might have forgotten that he was waiting. After attending to her husband she came over with an apology. “I am so sorry to have kept you waiting long. I was serving my husband and hence the delay. Kindly excuse me”, she said.

Kausika remarked: “It is right and proper to attend on the husband, but a Brahmana like me should not be disregarded also. You are an arrogant woman.” She, however, pleaded—“Be not angry, please remember I had to keep you waiting because I was

\* C. Rajagopalachari—The Mahabharata—B. V. B. Series.

dutifully serving my husband. I am no crane to be killed by a violent thought and your rage can do no harm to me, the woman who devotes herself to the service of her husband."

Kausika was taken aback. He wondered how the woman knew of the crane incident. She continued; "O great one, you do not know the secret and sacredness of duty, and you are also not aware that anger is the greatest enemy of man. (Forgive me for the delay in attending to you. Go to Mithila King Janaka's capital) and be instructed by Dharma Vyādha (meaning Dutiful-hunter) living in that city."

Kausika was amazed still and said: "May you prosper! I deserve your admonition and it will do me good. May all good attend you." With these words he proceeded to Mithila to look for Dharma-vyādha's residence, which he thought would be some lonely hermitage far from the noise and bustle of common life. Having walked through the beautiful town he finally reaches a butcher's shop, in which was a man selling meat. His amazement was great when he learnt that this man was Dharma-vyādha.

Kausika was shocked beyond measure and stood at a respectful distance. The butcher rose from his seat and enquired: "Revered Sir, are you well? That Brahmana's wife sent you to me?" Kausika was stupefied. "Revered Sir, I know how you happened to be sent to me. We shall go to my house" said Dharma-vyādha.

In the house Kausika saw a happy family and was greatly struck by the devotion with which the butcher served his aged parents. He took the lesson from the butcher on Dharma, man's Calling and Duty. Thence he returned to his own house and began to tend his parents as a duty which he had rather neglected before. Says the Gita:

अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम् ।

विमुच्य निर्ममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥

(Gita xviii-53)

"Having given up egoism (self-opinionatedness), violence, arrogance, lust, anger and luxuries, freed from the notion of "mine" and having tranquillity of heart—such a person becomes qualified for one-ness with the Brahman, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss"; that is to say, "such a person is on his upward march towards perfection, and thus best suited for attaining to Brahma-pada"; also:

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।

समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥

(Gita xviii-54)

"Having reached Brahma-pada, tranquil minded, he neither grieves nor desires; he is the same to all beings; and he thus attains to supreme devotion unto Me." (Gita xviii-54)

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान् यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।

ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥

"Through that supreme devotion he comes to know Me in reality, what and how great I am; and thereby knowing Me in essence he forthwith enters into My Being." (Gita xviii-55)

"Any amount of sacrifice or service to others does not in reality benefit the intended beneficiaries but only helps to purify the heart of him who renders such service. Our services may even prove detrimental sometimes to society and it may be well off without our interference.....But every man should try to serve another with all sincerity which in truth is service to himself in the form of purification." (H. H. Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi, [B.B. Jl. 12-8-1956.]

## 4

*Duty that illumines\**.—In illustrating the above principle of Duty there is mentioned another story similar to that of Dharma-vyadha, which is as follows :

A young Sannyasin went to a forest, there he meditated, worshipped and practised yoga for a long time. After years of hard work and practice, he was one day sitting under a tree, when some dry leaves fell upon his head. He looked up and saw a crow and a crane fighting on the top of the tree, which made him angry. He said "How dare you throw these dry leaves upon my head?" As with these words he angrily looked at the birds a flash of fire went out of his head—such was the yogi's power—and burnt the birds to ashes. The yogi was very glad, almost overjoyed at this development of power—he could burn the crow and the crane by a look. After a time he had to go to the town to beg his bread. He went, stood at a door and asked, "Mother, give me food!"

A voice came from inside the house, "wait a little my son." The young man thought, "you wretched woman, how dare you make me wait? You do not know my power yet."

While he was thinking thus the voice came again: "Boy, don't be thinking too much of yourself. Here is neither crow nor crane."

\* Swami Vivekananda—\*Advaitashram"—(B.B. Jl. Dec. 1, 1957.)

He was astonished, still he had to wait. At last the woman came, and he fell at her feet and asked: "Mother, how did you know that?"

She said: "My boy, I do not know your Yoga or your practices. I am a common everyday woman. I made you wait because my husband is ill, and I was nursing him. All my life I have struggled to do my duty, when I was unmarried I did my duty to my parents, now that I am married, I do my duty to my husband; that is all the yoga I practise. But by doing my duty I have become illumined; thus I could read your thoughts and know what you had done in the forest. If you want to know something higher than this, go to the market of such and such a town where you will find a Vyādha (hunter) who will tell you something that you will be very glad to learn."

The Sannyasin thought, "why should I go to that town and to a Vyādha?" But after what he has seen, his mind opened a little, so he went; when he came near the town he found the market, and there saw, at a distance a big fat Vyādha cutting meat with big knives, talking and bargaining with different people.

The young man said, "Lord help me! Is this the man from whom I am going to learn? He is the incarnation of a demon, if he is anything!"

In the meantime the Vyādha looked up and said: "O, Swami, did that lady send you here? Take your seat until I have done my business." The Sannyasi thought, "what comes to me here?" He took his seat; the man went on with his work and after he had finished, he took his money and said to the Sannyasin, "come, Sir, come to my home."

On reaching the home the Vyādha gave him a seat saying, "wait here" and went into the house. He then washed his old father and mother, fed them and did all he could to please them, after which he came to the Sannyasin and said, "Now, Sir, you have come here to see me, what can I do for you?"

The Sannyasin asked him a few questions about Soul and about God, and the Vyādha gave him a lecture which forms a part of the Mahabharata, called the Vyādha-Gita. It contains one of the highest flights of the Vedanta.

When the Vyādha finished his teaching the Sannyasin felt astonished. He said, "why are you in that body? With such knowledge as yours why are you in a Vyādha's body, and doing such filthy, ugly work?"

"My son," replied the Vyādha, "no duty is ugly, no duty is impure, My birth placed me in these circumstances and environments. In my boyhood I learnt the trade; I am unattached, and I try to do my duty as a householder, and I try to do all I can to make my father and mother happy. I neither know your yoga, nor have I become a sannyasin nor did I go out of the world into a forest; nevertheless, all that you have heard and seen has come to me through the *unattached doing of duty which belongs to my position.*"

*The moral.*—Thus, in the story, the Vyādha and the woman did their duty with cheerfulness and whole-heartedness; and the result was that they became illuminated, clearly showing that the right performance of the duties of any station in life, without attachment to results, leads us to the highest realisation of the perfection of the Soul.

It is the worker who is attached to results that grumbles about the nature of the duty which has fallen to his lot; to the unattached worker all duties are equally good, and form efficient instruments with which selfishness and sensuality may be killed, and the freedom of Soul secured.

We are all apt to think too highly of ourselves, our duties are determined by our deserts to a much larger extent than we are willing to grant.

Competition rouses envy, and it mills the kindliness of the heart.

To the grumbler all duties are distasteful, nothing will ever satisfy him and his whole life is doomed to prove a failure.

Let us work on, doing as we go whatever happens to be our duty, and being ever ready to put our shoulder to the wheel. Then surely shall we see The Light!

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## 5

*Self-sacrifice and devotion to duty.*—Among the Gita-type of Karma-yogis of our time may be mentioned the name of that pioneer of Women Nurses, Florence Nightingale, of whom Longfellow wrote as follows:—

"Lo! in that house of misery  
A Lady with a lamp I see  
Pass through the glimmering gloom  
And flit from room to room."

And Lytton Strachy wrote about her thus :

" For to those who watched her at work among the sick, moving day and night from bed to bed, with that unflinching courage, with that indefatigable vigilance, it seemed as if the concentrated force of an undivided and unparalleled devotion could hardly suffice for that portion of her task (of washing) alone. Wherever, in those vast wards, suffering was at its worst and the need for help was greatest, there, as if by magic, was Miss Nightingale. Her super-human *equanimity* (the italics are mine) would, at the moment of some ghastly operation nerve the victim to endure and almost to hope. Her sympathy would assuage the pangs of dying and bring back to those still living something of the forgotten charm of life. Over and over again her untiring efforts rescued those whom the surgeons had abandoned as beyond the possibility of cure. Her mere presence brought with it a strange influence."

Her figure is legendary and her lamp has become the "Light of Knowledge and Truth."

She was a rich highly connected woman, who gave everything to relieve the distress of the wounded in the Crimean War, and while doing so contracted dysentery and the dreaded Crimean fever.

She has inspired many girls to follow in her footsteps and to take up a life of self-sacrifice and devotion to the work of alleviating pain.

Hospitals lose much of their dread when there are bright smiling nurses. The very presence of such nurses and attentive, sympathetic and conscientious doctors help a patient more than half-way along the road to recovery. The mind is more important than the body and much depends on the attitude and manner of the Doctors and Nurses.

The period of training for nurses is a long and strenuous and thorough course, and there are many difficulties which a young trainee has to face. The hours are exacting, one has to be on one's feet for long stretches, and there is little time for a "change," but the joy of serving humanity is certainly greater than the joy of working in offices or institutions where personal contact with others is rare. The nature of their work is also such where presence of mind, absolute obedience and alertness are in constant demand.

Nurses need not be confined to hospitals or nursing homes. Cities should have health nurses who check up public-health work and become as it were "Health Missionaries." They can make a drive to have clean houses and the conditions necessary for maintaining such homes. They can agitate for decent roads free from rubbish and garbage.

Health campaigns can be started in villages by Nurses who live and share the life interests of the villagers. Where hospitals and facilities for medical aid do not exist nurses can go out with mobile health-units. Village women who are ignorant of health rules and the value of preventive measures against disease can be given health instructions. Where necessary, school teachers can be taught how to deal with basic health problems.

At the end of the training the full-fledged nurse emerges. She is a *poised* and compassionate individual possessing a trained intelligence. She must have personal discipline and must keep her head in an emergency. She must have the capacity of working without sparing herself. This new individual might lose the feeling of exaltation that fills her when she takes her final plunge. It might become dim when she faces the most unpleasant and hardest tasks; yet, the knowledge and certainty that she is the bearer of hope in the midst of pain and suffering will cheer her up. And by her devotion to duty and spirit of self-sacrifice she is virtually *the Muni in Wisdom-poised* of the Gita :

“Duhkheṣu anudwignamanāḥ  
Sukheṣu vigatasprāh  
Vcetarāga bhaya krodhah  
Sthitadheer muniruchyate.”

(Gita ii-56)

“Whose mind is not perturbed by grief,  
Who doth not hanker after joy,  
Who's free from fear and love and wrath,  
That Muni is in *wisdom-poised*.”

(Gita ii-56)

So continues the ceaseless, unbroken march of this white-robed band of the so-called *loka-sangraha* workers. As each new recruit joins their Order she takes the solemn pledge of “devoting herself to the welfare of those committed to her care,” and tries to fulfil it to the best of her ability.

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(Here I may be pardoned for introducing a personal element, namely, from personal knowledge of the Charity Sisters attached to the Government Head-quarters Hospitals at Madura and at Bellary, where I served as the District Medical Officer some years ago, and also of those attached to Fr. Muller's Hospitals at Kankanady, Mangalore, where I underwent, in July 1957, a major surgical operation, I found that their work was ideal, and I have every praise for them. They also very well deserve the appellation—“Muni in *wisdom-poised*” of the Gita.)

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## CHAPTER V

### THE GITA WAY OF LIFE\*

#### *Preliminary Remarks.*

#### MY SISTERS AND BROTHERS,

When I see these smiling faces before me, most of whom, I am glad to say, are very familiar, how I wish I became young again, so that I too could sit by their side and taste the sweetness of the Gitāmrit doled out to them by their teachers. In our student days, that is about 60 years ago, we had no opportunities whatsoever of this sort as there was, then, not even a thought of religious instructions being given in schools, and the idea of the study of religion generally dawned in us, except in the case of a few, rather late in the day. The present generation of students may, therefore, be considered lucky indeed in several respects, and luckier at any rate, than ourselves, in respect of religious learning in spite of our age, and on this account they deserve our congratulations on this achievement of theirs and at this early age, their teachers also deserve our praises in this regard, and Dr. Kesava Pai especially, who has played the part of the *Kaivertakah* Keshavah of the Gita.

#### *After the Gita-Recitation—Prize distribution :*

While I congratulate the recipients of prizes this evening and sympathise with those who have failed to obtain any, I feel, and it is expected of me also at this function, that some useful advice to my young friends on this occasion will not be out of place,—an advice which might help them on to become later in life useful members of a decent society.

My young friends, these examinations, passes and failures of school-life are nothing, are of no material import, when compared with the successes and failures of later life, which you have yet to live after your scholastic career, and of which I am sure, and I wish also, you have a long span before you. That life, I must forewarn you however, so that you may be forearmed, is full of examinations, examinations at every stage and of a much stiffer and more searching character, of greater trials and hardships, and of failures, Success also is common enough in that life, but that is attained only with difficulty and by sheer dint of work.

\* Originally delivered at the Gita-Jayanthi Celebrations in the Besant National Girls' High School, Mangalore, in December, 1951, and improved upon while going to the Press.

Even graduation is only a milestone in life's journey and should not be considered as marking the journey's end, nor a sign-post on the way as the goal.

This caution, however, need not baffle you, discourage you or make you anxious or desparate about that life. Certainly proper ways and means have been devised by humanity from time to time and laid down by wise men as moral codes, codes of Religion and Ethics, for the guidance of mankind to enable them to tide over the crises of life; only, you must begin now, equip yourself from now, when you are still young and energetic and capable of work and study, with the necessary training of the body and mind. "Make hay while the Sun shines." "Take Time by the forelock." These must be your guiding principles. And if you should work diligently and perseveringly success in that life is as good as assured now.

Cultivate wise habits of living, of thinking and of feeling, for, these themselves are protective against abnormal modes of life. Consider failure or frustration as a normal part of life and accept it as such, and that a period of failure is incidental to nearly every undertaking. You should, therefore, understand that the feeling of failure, even though that sense might persist for some time, is not in itself sufficient reason to abandon your efforts, but instead, the work be carried through to a successful termination. Supposing that is found impossible you should not be disheartened but should courageously attempt another honest effort.

Failure and suffering are the two eye-openers, so to say. So also adversity, and "Sweet are its uses." "Sweet are the uses of adversity, which, like the toad ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head." (Shakespeare). They should be considered God-sent for the good of mankind, to evolve out of him a better being, because repeated doses of failure, of suffering, of adversity teach man cautiousness and vigilance, harden him and render him immune, to use a medical term, against greater failures and hardships.

Now, Work is an important factor in every human being's life; without work there is no happiness, there can be no health, but instead, there is often mental instability and general unhappiness. The sooner a person can decide that he must work, that he is going to carry his load of responsibility and is going to do the work gracefully and easily, the better are his chances of a comfortable and successful adaptation or "fitting" into the social whole.

Now, one should work with a purpose, preferably a desire to be of service to humanity and with the minimum consideration

of the personal gain or reward that might accrue from the effort.  
Says Sree Krishna :

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूः मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

"Thy Concern is with action alone,  
And not to seek its fruit at all.  
Seek not the fruit of action thou,  
Nor to inaction be attached."

(Gita II-47)

also

नियतं संगरहितं अरागद्वेषतः कृतम् ।  
अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत्तत् सात्त्विकमुच्यते ॥

"An action from attachment free,  
And love and hate, and well-controlled,  
Performed by him who seeks no fruit,—  
"Satwika" is that action called."

(Gita XVIII-23)

You must decide to do the work that falls to your lot interestedly, willingly and "smilingly," and as intelligently and gracefully as your physical powers and talents permit.

अजरामरवत् प्राज्ञो विद्यां अर्थं च साधयेत् ।  
गृहीत इव केशेषु मृत्युना धर्ममाचरेत् ॥

(Hitopadesa)

which means :

"In the matter of acquisition of wealth and knowledge, the wiseman should think that he is ever free from old age and death; but regarding the performance of his Duty he must attend to it without the least delay, as if he has already been caught hold of by his hair-lock by the god of Death," that is to say, no time should be lost in attending to one's duties.

It is only this frame of mind, my young friends, that really enables you to set at nought all fear and anxiety, and helps you in your progress and ensures your success. In your daily life, therefore, learn to dispel all thoughts of fear, even thoughts of death—"Death is inevitable, let it come in its own time. Death is only a passage to another life, and what is therefore required to meet it is something to one's credit in this life, which one may be proud of taking to the next life. Then Death would be hailed and met gladly." "Death is delightful, Death is dawn, the waking from weary night of fevers into Truth and Light." "Death after a life truly lived is but a prelude to a better and richer life" says Gandhiji.

" Our egress from this World  
Will be no body knows where,  
But if we do well here  
We shall do well there "

(Longfellow)

You must dispel all imagination of weakness (known in common parlance as "Inferiority-complex"), all imagination of disease (hypochondriasis), all discordant emotions, as of anger, hatred, malice, envy and revenge, and of sensuality, as thereby you banish all temptations to do evil or even think of doing evil.

Says the Gita :

अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम् ।  
विमुच्य निर्ममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥

" Devoid of egoism and power,  
Desire and wrath, and pride and luxuries,  
And thought of " this is mine "—at peace—  
Is fit to be with—Brahma—one."

(Gita XVIII-53)

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न कांक्षति ।  
समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥

" Happy in soul, with Brahma—one,  
He neither grieveth nor desires ;  
The same to every one, he gains  
Supreme devotion unto Me."

(Gita XVIII-54)

Cultivate a strong will-power to brace yourself against life's temptations in every possible way. Have Hope, have Confidence, have Cheer,—for these give you immense moral and mental strength and vigour. Take life in a cheerful spirit, take things as they present themselves and try to tackle difficult situations in a manly (meaning " courageous "), cheerful and bold spirit, and never be despondent or dejected.

Use only sweet words, even animals could be pleased thereby and they cost you nothing at all.

And above all, believe in God, have Faith in Him and pray for His Grace in all your undertakings.

For, Has He not said that :

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।  
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मग्नित्तः सततं भव ॥

" Surrendering mentally all actions to Me,  
Absorbed in Me and resorting to the Yoga  
Of discrimination, fix your mind always in Me."

(Gita XVIII-57)

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।

अथ चेत् त्वमहंकारात् न श्रोष्यसि विनश्यसि ॥

“With your mind fixed in Me, you will overcome all your difficulties by My Grace, but if from egoism you will not listen to My advice you will be utterly destroyed.” (Gita XVIII-58)

My friends, this is in mere outline the way of life that has come down to mankind for their guidance from the great thinkers of yore, our Rishis, World-Teachers of Religion and Ethics, and is more or less the way of action that was thundered into the ears of Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra by Sree Krishna when that hero, great as he was, sinks in his chariot unable to fight, at the critical moment and when the battle-drums and war-trumpets have already sounded and missiles of war-fare have begun to hurl. Arjuna was overpowered by a sense of grief or morbid pity (*kri-payāparayā vishāh*) for his Gurus, friends and kinsmen (*swājana*) arrayed opposite, prepared for either, to kill or to die; that is to say, Arjuna becomes (*dharma-samudha chetāh*), forgets at the time that his duty was to fight.

Here it must be pointed out that it is a common principle in human psychology that, however bold or heroic an individual may normally be, in moments of gloom, disappointment or distress he is apt to lose his balance of mind and capacity to reason. His mind gets clouded, so to say, by false ideas, false emotions and false values, and the impulses, emotions and sentiments prevail on the power of reasoning. The power of discriminating the right from the wrong, the just from the unjust, or the fair from the unfair, is then at fault, and the mind oscillates from one end of pity or sympathy to the other end of fright or horror. The mind is never steady. Elation and dejection, pity and horror are experienced in one way or the other.

That was the state of the mind of Arjuna at the time.

The real position of Arjuna has been poetically and beautifully painted by Sanjaya in the Gita thus :

तं तथा कृपयाविष्टमधुसूदनं कुलेक्षणम् ।

विपीडन्तमिदं वाक्यमुवाच मधुसूदनः ॥

“To him who was thus overwhelmed with pity and sorrowing, and whose eyes were dimmed with tears, Madhusudana (Sree Krishna) spoke these words.” (Gita II-2)

The Blessed Lord said :

कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपरिधतम् ।

अनायजुष्टमखर्च्यमकीर्तिकर्मजुन ॥

"In such a strait, whence comes upon thee, O Arjuna, this dejection, un-Arya-like, disgraceful, and contrary to the attainment of *Veeraswarga*?" (Gita II-2)

हैद्यं माम् गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।  
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्तवोत्तिष्ठ परंतप ॥

"Yield not to unmanliness, O Son of Pritha, Ill doth it become thee, Cast off this Mean faint-heartedness and arise, O scorcher of thine enemies!" (Gita II-3)

Here the question arises—"Why does Sree Krishna goad Arjuna to fight?" Answer: "Because it was *not* that the disinclination of Arjuna to fight arose out of the overwhelming predominance of pure *sattwa-guna*, it was all *thamo-guna* that brought on the unwillingness."

"The nature of a man of *sattwa-guna* is that he is equally calm in all situations in life—whether it be prosperity or adversity. But Arjuna was afraid, he was overwhelmed with pity. That he had the instinct and inclination to fight is proved by the simple fact, that he came to the battle-field with no other purpose than that." (Swami Vivekananda—Thoughts on the Gita). "If one reads this one Shloka (Gita ii-3) of the Gita one gets all the पुण्यम् (merit) of reading the entire Gita," says Swami Vivekananda, "for in this one Shloka lies imbedded the whole Message of the Gita."

At this juncture the Lord comes to his rescue with the following advice regarding the "Duty of the Kshatriya-born." Says Sree Krishna:

"And looking at thy Duty too,  
Thou oughtest not to tremble so;  
Nothing is higher than a war  
Of righteousness for a Kshatriya-born—" (Gita II-31)

"But if thou wilt not undertake,  
This righteous war, O Arjuna,  
Then righteousness and honour all  
Forfeiting, wilt thou reap but sin." (Gita II-33)

"And then will all the people speak  
Of thy ever-lasting shame;  
And unto one who is esteemed,  
Dishonour-blot is worse than death." (संभावितस्य चाप्रीतिः मरणात् अतिरिच्यते ।) (Gita II-34)

"Slain, wilt thou attain to heaven (*veeraswarga*)  
Victorious, wilt thou enjoy the kingdom affluent,  
Therefore arise, O Kunthi's son,  
Resolved in battle to engage." (Gita II-37)

(It is a glory to die fighting on the battlefield, they say it is the best of deaths)

"Looking alike on joy and pain,  
Success, defeat, and gain and loss,  
Be thou for battle now prepared  
And so no sin will come to thee." (Gita II-38)

(This is the only key to a successful life. It is to work that one should look to and be indifferent to the results, agreeable or disagreeable. To feel puffed up at success or despondent at failure is going wrong.)

Arjuna then casts off his unmanliness (*klaibyam*) and faint-heartedness (*hridaya dourbalyam*) and rises up and fights. And he wins the war by the Grace of the Lord! The entire teaching of the Gita resolves itself in the words of Sanjaya to this:

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।  
तत्र श्रीः विजयो भूतिर्धुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥

"Wherever is Sree Krishna, the Lord of Yoga (for Grace) wherever is Partha (Nara) for Action, not the type of Partha that sank in the chariot a few minutes ago unable to fight, but the one with his weapon, Gandiva lifted for action, ready to fight, fight the enemy, fight evil, there are Prosperity (*Shreeh*), Victory (*Vijayah*), Glory (*Bhootih*; *vibhootir-bhootiraiswaryam*) (Amara)—*Aishwaryam* means wealth, not material wealth but *Esswaree-sampath* or *Daivee-sampath*) and Lasting Wisdom (*dhruvaneethih*). Such is my firm conviction!" (Gita XVIII-78)

Allegorically expressed: "When you bow to the Paramātman, seated in the chariot of your heart as Sree Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, and recognise yourself as Arjuna armed with the Gandiva (of Bhakthi) and arrows (of Shakthi) and fight the Dharma-yuddha in the Kurukshetra field of Samsāra, then all Wealth and Victory, Glory and Lasting Wisdom are yours for ever!

"Meditate, then, on the Divine Charioteer, holding the reins of Destiny and the whip of Inspiration, and seated in the chariot of the heart, and driving the milk-white steeds, the purified senses, on the Kurukshetra field of Life."

"The Gita may thus be said to stand for an active moral life. It asks us to accept the very challenge of life. Every challenge in life according to the Author of the Gita, is at once a

# Essentials of the Bhagavad Gita

crisis and an opportunity. It has no secret message which absolves man from active moral life. Flight from life into retreats is deprecated, and formal renunciation and inactive life is condemned in severe terms.

And the injunction—"Arise, Resolved to fight" often repeated in the Gita can be said to be the Central Message of the Lord.

Compare :

"In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac<sup>1</sup> of Life,  
Be not like dumb-driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife.

"Trust No Future, how'er pleasant!  
Let the dead Past bury its dead!  
Act,—act in the living Present!  
Heart within, and God overhead!"

(A Psalm of Life—Longfellow)

To trust in God with all the heart is a great virtue. It brings in its train all other qualities that make a man true one. In hours of trial, when darkness prevails all round and man's thoughts are confused, there is no other way left but to resign oneself to the Lord and say, "Let Thy will be done." Such a belief will bring about a healthy state of mind, which is capable of bearing the misfortunes of life and at the same time regaining the lost ground. These virtues in the character of man make him an expert in the art of living well.

May that Lord save us from evil thoughts, evil temptations, and be our Helmsman (*Karnadharah*)<sup>2</sup> in this voyage of Life, and Ferryman (*Kaivartakah*)<sup>3</sup> to ferry us across the ocean of Samsara<sup>4</sup> Strife and Suffering!

Om Shanti!

(PEACE).

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1. "Bivouac" means a temporary encampment of life.
  2. Helmsman (*Karnadharah*)
  3. Ferryman (*Kaivartakah*).
  4. *Samsara* or *samsarita* is the cycle of Births and Deaths. It is not the equivalent of "Family" as is commonly understood.



## CHAPTER VI.

### *The Ideal Man of the Gita*

Like all the great scriptures of the world the Gita holds out before us a great deal and describes in detail the means of achieving it. "The Ideal man of the Gita is not the pure contemplative, unconnected with the busy world, nor is he "the unregenerate practical realist who believes in the existence of this world and this world only." On the other hand, we have in the Gita four elaborate descriptions of the Ideal man :

1. The man of Tranquil Wisdom, or *stitha-prajna* ;
2. The True Devotee, or the Bhakta ;
3. The Trigunātēta—The one who has crossed over the Three Gunās and is thus free from their influence.
4. The Jnāni.

#### 1. *The stitha-prajna*

Questions Arjuna :

"What is the mark of him who is wise,  
And fixed in meditation deep?  
How speaketh he in wisdom firm  
And sits and moves, O Keshava ?" (Gita II-54)

And The Lord replies:

"When he renounces all desires,  
Born of the mind, O Pritha's son,  
Pleased by the soul within the soul  
Firm is his wisdom said to be." (Gita II-55)

"Whose mind is not disturbed by grief,  
Who doth not hanker after joy,  
Who is free from fear and love and wrath—  
That Muni is in wisdom firm." (Gita II-56)

(A great man is he whose mind is well-balanced. Misfortune and pleasures have both the same repercussions on him. For him there is no fear, no anxiety, no pain, no pleasure. for he is concerned with performance of his duty alone. Such a person bears all that may befall him.)

"Without attachment anywhere,  
Who is not pleased, nor yet displeased,  
Whatever he gets of good or ill—  
Firm is his wisdom said to be." (Gita II-57)

"As a tortoise doth withdraw its limbs,  
From every side when he withdraws  
His senses from their objects all—  
Firm in his wisdom said to be."

(Gita II-58)

It is the conquest of the self that is most difficult. The senses are not easily controlled, and it is in the accomplishment of this hardest work that the real worth of man lies. The bravest alone can subjugate the mind and keep under control the senses, that always run after wordly pleasures and temptations.

(B. N. Khanna\*)

"Controlling the senses, the steadfast one  
Should have Me for his goal Supreme;  
Who hath his senses in control,—  
Firm is his wisdom said to be."

(Gita II-61)

The steadiness of mind is the greatest virtue and the most difficult to be developed in man. The way to it lies through the earnest faith in God. That Power Supreme is to be kept before the mind's eye, for otherwise the mind would get upset by the various turmoils of the world. Belief in God provides a firm foundation upon which the structure of life may be safely laid. (*Ibid*).

"But he who is free from love and hate,  
Whose senses among their objects move,  
Whose soul is by his soul controlled,  
He doth attain the highest Peace."

(Gita II-64)

"And in that peace there comes to him  
An end to every grief and pain;  
For he who hath his mind at peace,  
His Buddhi is fixed in firmness soon."

(Gita II-65)

"Because the mind that follows all  
The Senses, roving everywhere,  
Doth all his wisdom bear away,—  
As bears a ship on waters, the gale."

(Gita II-67)

It is a state of helplessness when a ship is left to the mercy of the gale and is tossed about aimlessly to be wrecked ultimately. So is the life of man who is carried away by the restless senses as the helplessness of his becomes so apparent near his final destruction. Early discipline of the mind is therefore necessary, for afterwards it is like the flood in a river that is to be faced, when the embankments are washed off and the flowing water gets beyond control and proceeds to ravage the villages.

(*Ibid*).

\* The Lights of the Bhagavat Gita"—S. Chand & Co., Fountain-Delhi.

"Therefore, O thou of mighty arms  
The one whose senses are controlled  
From objects of the senses all,—  
Firm is his wisdom said to be." (Gita II-68)

"When it is night for everyone,  
The self-controlled one keeps awake;  
When others wake, the Seeing One,  
The stage, doth take it for his night." (Gita II-69)

That is to say: The reality is not known to ordinary men, who live in ignorance, in darkness. That what they think as true, is false and what is dark to them is Light for the Sage. The truth is known to a few. The people at large live in darkness, in the night of Illusion.

"As waters all into the ocean flow,—  
Unmoved and still, yet full on every side,—  
So when desires flow unto him, doth he  
Attain to Peace,—not he who seeks desires." (Gita II-70)

In other words: He attains peace to whom all desires flow as rivers flow into the ocean, which filled with water remains unaffected, but not he who is drowned in passions for sense objects. "The mind of man should be like an ocean into which should fall the streams of passions. The great minds are ocean-like." (*Ibid*).

"He who abandons all desires,  
And liveth from attachment free,  
Without conceit or selfishness,  
He doth attain to highest peace." (Gita II-71)

"This is the state of Brahman—this  
Attaining, one is ne'er perplexed;  
Therein established even at death,  
Nirvāṇa of Brāhmia-state he attains." (Gita II-72)

2. *The true Devotee, or the Bhakṭha*

"Who beareth hatred unto none,  
Is friendly and compassionate,  
And free from selfishness and pride,  
Patient, the same in joy and pain ; (Gita XII-13)

"Content, and always following yoga,  
With soul controlled and firm resolve  
With mind and Buddhi fixed on Me,—  
Dear is that devotee to me. (Gita XII-14)

"By whom the world is not perturbed,  
Nor by the world perturbed is he,  
From agitation, fear and joy  
And envy-free,—he is dear to me. (Gita XII-15)

"And pure and independent he,  
Keen, undisturbed, and undistressed,  
Renouncing all his actions too,—  
Dear is that devotee to Me. (Gita XII-16)

"Who hateth not, rejoiceth not,  
And grieveth not, nor hath desire,  
Renouncing good and evil all,—  
Dear is that devotee to Me. (Gita XII-17)

"Alike is he to friend and foe,  
Alike in honour and disgrace ;  
In cold and heat, and joy and pain  
Alike, and from attachment free. (Gita XII-18)

"Alike in censure and in praise,  
Silent, content with what may chance,—  
Without a home, with steady mind,—  
Dear is that devotee to Me. (Gita XII-19)

"Who follow this Immortal Dharma,  
As I have now described to thee,—  
Endued with Faith, and I their goal,—  
Dear are those devotees to Me." (Gita XII-20)

"Real Bhakti or Devotion is that state when the devotee's mind is unable to bear even a moment's separation from the shelter of God, and when even if it is forcibly withdrawn by circumstances from that shelter, it struggles and rushes back and attaches itself to God, like a needle to a magnet."—H. H. Jagadguru Sri Shankaracharya of Kanchi (B. B. JI. 9—3—1958).

3. The Trigunāteeta

(The one who has risen above the three Guna-s, Sattwa, Rajas and Thamas).

Questions Arjuna :

"What are the marks of him, O Lord,  
Who hath risen above these Gunas Three?  
What is his conduct, how doth he  
Rise above all the Gunas three?" (Gita XIV-21)

To which, the Lord answers:  
"Who hateth not light, nor action, nor  
Moha fond, O Pandava,  
When they are present,—nor desires  
To have them when they cease to be." (Gita XIV-22)

That is to say, he who hates not Light (*Prakāsha*), which is born of Sattwa Guna, and Activity (*Pravritti*) which is born of Rajo-Guna, and even Moha or stupor, which is born of Thamo-Guna, when prevalent, nor longs for them when they have ceased to be.

Explanation :

When sloth and dullness have disappeared from the body, senses and mind, and a feeling of lightness, purity and liveliness pervades them, such a feeling is known by the name of "Prakasha," or Light. Wisdom, tranquillity and joy are ever present in the man who has risen above the Gunas. They are never absent in him. That is why the verse speaks of "light" alone among the effects of Sattwaguna. That is to say, if light automatically appears in his body, senses and mind he feels no aversion for it; nor does he long for its return when it has disappeared. Its appearance and disappearance make no difference to him.

The urge to undertake activities of various kinds is called *Pravritti*. The other effects of Rajo-guna, such as lust, greed, craving and attachment, etc., are no longer present in him who has transcended the Gunas. Of course, activity of some sort is undertaken by the body and senses of even such a man, but the same is covered by the term "*Pravritti*." That is why, of all the effects of Rajo-guna, the verse emphasises the absence of attachment and aversion for *Pravritti* or Activity alone. That is to say, when there is an urge in the mind of him who has risen above the Gunas to undertake any action, or when the same is actually undertaken by his body, he feels no aversion for the same; and when this is not the case, he does not hanker for it either. The appearances and disappearances of an urge or activity make no difference to him.

"Moha" is that stupefying tendency of the mind, which induces drowsiness, dream and deep slumber, etc., and robs the body, senses and mind of light born of sattwaguna. The other effects of Thamoguna, such as ignorance, etc., cease to exist in him, who has transcended the gunas; for ignorance cannot even enter the outskirts of wisdom and, in the absence of any door, erring is out of question. Therefore of all the effects of Thamoguna, the verse emphasizes the absence of attachment and aversion or "Moha" or stupor alone. That is to say, when the body of the man who has risen above the three Gunas is swayed by effects of Thamoguna in the shape of drowsiness, dream or deep slumber, he feels no aversion for the same; and when they relax their hold on them, he does not long for their return. Their appearance and disappearance make no difference to him.

"Who, sitting like one unconcerned,  
Is not by Gunas ever moved,  
And knowing how the Gunas act  
Is steady and unwavering;

(Gita XIV-23)

"Centred within and firm, alike  
In joy and pain, or praise or blame,—  
Alike to him earth, stone and gold,  
And pleasant or unpleasant things;

(Gita XIV-24)

"Alike in honour and disgrace,  
Alike to friend or foe,  
Renouncing all deeds begun,  
He's said to have crossed the Gunas three.

(Gita XIV-25)

It is these qualities that bind the Self, and transcending them means attaining immortality. It is by renouncing actions as by detaching oneself from the fruits of actions that the Realisation of the Self is achieved. Such a person is above honour or dishonour, alike to friends and foes, contended, unmindful of pain or pleasure.

"Who worships Me with steady mind,—  
Devotion in the light of Yoga,—  
Crossing over Gunas, doth deserve  
With Brahma to be made as one."

(Gita XIV-26)

Here the Lord points out the means as well as the reward of rising above the Gunas.

"For I am Brahma's true abode,—  
The Immortal and Immutable,—  
Of Everlasting Dharma I,  
And perfect joy and happiness."

(Gita XIV-27)

Here the Lord concludes by declaring Himself as the foundation of Brahma, and so on in as much as they are all identical with Him.

#### 4. The Jnani.

Jnana is both metaphysical knowledge and spiritual realisation, and in the highest sense of the word means "the experience of the mystic unity of all things in God, and the vision of Vishwaroopa is the symbol of this experience. Jnana includes the highest moral quality as well as Devotion to God and service to man, and there is no distinction between the highest Jnana and the highest Bhakti. In the lower stage Jnana and Bhakti strengthen each other. What is known as Shraddhā or Faith is incipient Jnana, but Faith must culminate in vision before it results in Moksha.

The Gita is thus a Gospel of yoga or fellowship with God, whether that fellowship is interpreted in terms of disinterested service or self-forgetting love or mystical knowledge or realisation. Moreover, it is a gospel in which we find a burning plea for religion in everyday life. That is why, though it is addressed to a soldier in the battle-field, it comes home to all of us. It comes home to the tiller in his field, to the scholar merchant in his shop, to the lawyer in his chambers, to the scholar in his study, or to the Doctor at the patient's bed-side, exhorting them all to do their duty, to love their fellow-beings and to worship God and thus reach their Supreme Goal of Life. In a verse, which Sree Sankara regards as the very essence of the Gita, says The Bhagavan:

मत्कर्मकृत् मत्परमो मद्भक्तः संगवर्जितः ।  
निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥

"Who acts for Me, whose goal am I,  
All unattached, who prays to Me,  
And beareth enmity to none,—  
He comes to Me, O Pandava."

(Gita XI-55)

That is to say:—

"He who dedicates all his actions to Me and looks to Me as his supreme Goal, a devotee to Me, renouncing all attachments, cherishing no feelings of envy or hatred to any being, he comes unto Me."

*Note:—Matkarmakrit* is one who has renounced all forms of selfishness, the sense of possession and attachment, and regarding everything as belonging to God, and himself as a mere instrument, carries on all his duties such as the performance of sacrifice, charity, penance and bodily functions and worldly transactions in a disinterested spirit only for the pleasure of God and according to His Commandment.

"True Prayer is the offering up of Desires, in entire subjection to the Will of God." (Wayland).

## CHAPTER VII

### *Sharanāgati*

This Dedication—Eeshwara Pranidhāna—or Surrender to God, is enjoined by the Gita often and again with increasing stress every time.

Says the Lord :

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

“The Lord Supreme dwells, O Arjuna,  
Within the hearts of Creatures all ;  
And by His Māyā moveth them,  
Mounted as if on a machine.”

(Gita XVIII-61)

Māyā is Divine power.

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

तत्प्रसादात् परं शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥

“So do thou seek, O Bharata,  
Refuge in Him by all means ;

And by His Grace wilt thou attain

Peace—Supreme, Eternal and Changeless. (Gita XVIII-62)

सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः ।

इष्टोऽसि मे हृदमिति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् ॥

“Hear thou again My word Supreme,  
Profoundest of all things that be :  
I'll tell thee what for thee is best,—  
For dearly loved art thou by Me.”

(Gita XVIII-64)

Therefore,

सन्मना भव मद्रक्तो मयाजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥

“Think of Me, be My Devotee,  
Worship Me, sacrifice to Me ;

So wilt thou come, I tell thee true,  
To Me, for thou art dear to me.”

(Gita XVIII-65)

That is to say, “Looking upon the Lord as thy aim, means and end, thou shalt attain the Highest. Have therefore implicit faith in the Declarations of Me, the Lord, as I pledge thee My truth, My word.”



Therefore,

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

“Do thou, renouncing Dharma all,  
Take refuge in Me alone;  
And I will free thee evermore  
From all thy sins, so do not grieve.” (Gita XVIII-66)

[“All dharmas”—include *adharma*s also, all actions, righteous or unrighteous, since absolute freedom from the bondage of all action is intended to be taught here.

“Take refuge in Me alone”—knowing that there is nothing higher than Me (*mattah parataram nānyat*), the Self of all, dwelling the same in all.

“Free thee from all thy sins”—by manifesting Myself as thy own Self.

“All sins”—all bonds of dharma and *adharma*.]

*Note*:—Shree Shankara in his commentary here very strongly combats the opinion of these who hold that highest spiritual realisation (Jñāna) and ritualistic work (Karma) may go together in the same person. For Karma is possible only in the relative world (*Samsāra*) which is the outcome of ignorance (*avidyā*), and knowledge dispels this ignorance. So neither the conjunction of Jñāna with Karma, nor Karma alone conduces to the absolute cessation of *samsāra*, but it is only the Right Knowledge of the Self which does so. (Swami Swarupānanda)

“The above message of the Gita,” writes Munshi, “can be said to have soothed aching hearts through centuries. How is this explained? It is not easy to achieve this “surrender” as it is to understand it. Bhaktas have spent their whole life in vain attempts to realise it. It is the most difficult and yet the most exquisite of the ways which lead to the growth of a great personality. Without it, “God-Perfection” never dwells in us. Without it “Becoming” remains unreal, for there is nothing to reach forward to.

“To the modern unbelieving mind, which has no patience with things religious, this may be difficult, “if not impossible to grasp. But personality cannot grow in stark isolation. Nothing develops personality as the influence of another personality, may be of a father, a teacher or Guru, a friend or a beloved. The stronger this personality the greater is its potency. Certain persons draw us out. In their presence we grow better and bigger. One word from them, and we acquire the strength we never had before.

If such a person were with us day and night, or he dwelt with us in our imagination, his inspiration would never fail us. We would then grow from strength to strength. This "indwelling" of a great personality becomes a powerful force making us more and more of "ourselves."

"When we are near a great personality we not only hear him speak of men and things, but also note these chance remarks which let us into its secrets. We are then possessed as it were by it, it haunts us when we leave him. Our word and deed unconsciously come to be tested on the touchstone of his personality. We are influenced, not so much by what he says as by what *he is*."

We are all familiar with the "conscious" "in-dwelling" of our favourite authors, their characters are more to us than our friends or relatives, we unconsciously adopt their attitude and verbal tricks, we grow through these masters "in-dwelling" in us. If the one abiding in us is living, the influence is still more remarkable. Who has not been shaped and moulded by the beloved's in-dwelling in one's heart? (*vide*, Story of Bilvamangals).\*

"The continuity of India's culture and tradition, the main source of its strength, is admittedly due to the spirit of Sage Vedavyāsa, enshrined in his Mahabharata having "in-dwelt" Indians for centuries; for countless generations its heroes have lived in men's imagination, its approach to life has been the approach to millions, its idioms, sentiments and ideals have refreshed and invigorated them. If India is worth living and dying for, it is because of the beauty and power which she has acquired by centuries of its surrender to Sree Vyasa.

"In-dwelling of the Supreme comes to him who ceaselessly meditates upon Him, who with high-strung emotion yearns to see Him, touch Him, love Him. Imagination then vividly conjures up His picture in living colours, the attention fondly dwells on His life and teachings, He ceases to be a thought, becomes a person. When yearning gives place to prayers, tears and heart-ache. He is no longer a Person to be worshipped externally, but a Presence seen, felt in oneself. The devotee then becomes "My-minded" (*man-manah*) and "My-souled" (*madgatah prānah*); his personality merges in Him, attains "My-hood" (*madbhāvam*). The limitations of the aspirant's personality then fade off, he casts forth desires woven into his mind. With Self alone content with Self, he becomes a sthithaprajna. Says the Blessed Lord :

\* "Hinduism and Modern Science" by the Author, II Ed, p. 151.

प्रजहाति यथा कामान्  
सर्वान् पार्थ मनोगतान् ।  
आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः  
स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥

"When he renounces all desires,  
Born of the mind, O Pritha's son,  
Pleased by the Soul within the Soul,  
Firm in his wisdom said to be."

(Gita II-55)

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।  
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

"Whose mind is not perturbed by grief,  
Who doth not hanker after joy,  
Who's free from fear and love and wrath,—  
That Muni is in wisdom firm."

(Gita II-56)

("Muni" means "the man of meditation.")

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहः तत्तत् प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।  
नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

"Without attachment anywhere,  
Who is not pleased, nor yet displeased,  
Whatever he gets of good or ill,—  
Firm is his wisdom said to be."

(Gita II-57)

In other words, "with heart unattached in luck whether fair or foul, he neither rejoices nor hates, his mind abiding in perfect poise."

Now, God cannot be known, much less realised through intellect. He abides in the man who not only reads His Gospel, but reads and repeats it till his attitude towards life is imperceptibly shaped through it.

We are of the earth, earthy. Our life is spent in a life-long struggle for money and position. And yet as we recite the Gita day-by-day, some of the sayings of the Lord stand out in the mind and we recognise their power. If the whole of the teaching possessed our mind God would come and dwell in us. Says the Lord:

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।  
ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु पाप्यहम् ॥

"I am alike to beings all ;  
Hateful to Me is none, or dear ;  
But those who worship Me alone,  
They are in Me and I in them."

(Gita IX-29)

That is to say : "Those who devoutly worship Me, abide in Me, and I too stand revealed in them." This is no metaphor.

Yogis and Bhaktas in India, the mystics of all ages and climes, were possessed by God in the same way. They had no choice, they obeyed Him, they lived but to be His instruments.

Therefore, says the Lord :

मग्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यसि युक्तवैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ।

"Fix thy mind on Me, be devoted to Me,  
Worship Me, and make obeisance to Me ;  
Thus linking the Self with Me, and  
Entirely depending on Me, thou shalt come unto Me."

(Gita IX-34)

(This is how we should worship God—perfect devotion, resignation to His Will and concentration of mind on Him are the ways to adore Him.)

This is no verbal consolation. It is a fact capable of actual experience. And the fortunate one who has had it, will grow in personality till its dimensions coincide with the Divine.

This is surrender unto God—Eeswara Pranidhana—The Final Message of the Gita. Not of Gita alone but of all religions. "Not I, but Christ liveth in Me" was the admission of Christian Saints.

Says Sree Krishna :

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

[अप्राप्तस्य प्राप्तिः=योगः

प्राप्तस्य परिपालनम् = क्षेमः]

"But those who worship Me alone,  
Thinking of Me, and no one else,  
To them, the steadfast, I give all  
They need and preserve what they possess."

(Gita IX-22)

Also,

कीर्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ।

(Pratijāneehi=Pratijnam kuru).(Sree Ramanuja)  
 "Proclaim it to the World, Arjuna, affirm it,  
 Promise it, My Bhakta never perishes." (Gita IX-31)

Finally,

अपि चेत् सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।  
 साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यक् व्यवसितो हि सः ॥

"Even if a sinner worship Me,  
 Devoted unto Me alone,  
 He should be deemed as good indeed  
 Because he rightly hath resolved." (Gita IX-30)

य इदं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।  
 भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयः ॥

"Who acts for Me, whose goal am I,  
 All unattached, who prays to Me,  
 And beareth enmity to none,—  
 He comes to Me, O Pandava." (Gita IX-55)

मत्कर्मकृत् मत्परमो मद्भक्तः संगवर्जितः ।  
 निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥

"Who this supremest mystery  
 Doth tell unto My devotees,  
 With deep devotion unto Me,—  
 Without a doubt will come to Me."

And, as to the nature of the offerings to be made to God the  
 Gita says:

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।  
 तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमभामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

"Whoso with love and devotion offers Me  
 A leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water pure,—  
 That offered with devotion, I  
 Accept of him of striving soul." (Gita IX-26)

What offering can we give him? It is not gold nor silver.  
 For if that were the case, the rich could have been the only few,  
 who could claim His love and Grace. Love of a devoted heart is  
 more dear to Him than the riches of the wealthy.

"Remember that God will not be mocked. Know that it is  
 the heart of the worshipper which He regards. We are never safe  
 till we love Him with our whole heart."—Bishop Henshawe.

The above stanza is capable, however, of a deeper meaning. The word पत्रं means a "leaf", also "the ear"; सुमनः literally means a "good mind," is also an equivalent of पुष्पं or flower; फलं (or fruit) also means "the lips," and तोयं (or water) signifies "tears shed from penitence." Thus the whole *sloka* means :

"Whoso listens to My words with a pure mind, chants his Prayers to Me, and is penitent for his sins, such an offering of the self-controlled made through Love and Devotion is very much relished by Me."

यत् करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।

यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत् कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥

"Whatever dost thou do or eat,  
Or sacrifice or give away,  
Or penance make, O Kunthi's son,—  
Do as an offering unto Me."

(Gita IX-27)

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *The Five Great Charters or Promises of Sree Krishna.*

They are :—

*I. Descent on Earth in human form (or Taking Avatars) whenever necessary.*

Says the Lord :

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।  
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

“Whenever, O thou of Bharata race,  
There is decay of righteousness,  
And springs unrighteousness around,  
Do I then bring forth myself.”

(Gita IV-7)

That is to say that God displays Himself in the best manner possible to the eye of man when too much ungodliness gets the better of him. It is in the cottages of the poor people who are exploited by the wicked that God is realised. God working in the form of man is also to be recognised when Vice prevails and Virtue decays. (B. N. Khanna)

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।  
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

“For the deliverance of the good,  
And evil-doers to destroy,  
And establish righteousness  
I am re-born from age to age.”

(Gita IV-8)

“God who oft descends to visit man unseen, and through their habitations walks to mark their doings”—Milton.

“The Spiritual evolution of humanity moves in Cycles, but this cycle is not a vicious circle; it is the circle of a screw or spiral, which at the end of each circulatory motion takes us upwards. When evils goes on accumulating, each cycle is moving to its inevitable end and a new force (Avatara) arises which destroys the accumulated evil and completes the cycle.”

(H. V. Divatia)

*II. No doer of goodwill come to ruin.*

पार्थ नैवेह नामुत्र विनाशस्तस्य विद्यते ।  
नहि कल्याणकृत् कश्चित् दुर्गतिं तान गच्छति ॥

1. The Lights of the Bhagavad Gita — S. Chard & Co., Fountain, Delhi.
2. The Art of Life in the Bhagavad Gita — B.V.B. Publication, Bombay-7.

"For him nor here nor there, indeed,  
Can ruin be, O Pritha's son,  
For him, my friend, who doeth good,  
No evil end can ever be."

(Gita VI-40)

No one can bring to grief a right-minded person. He goes on the path of righteousness, which is straight and for which he never feels sorry. Therefore there cannot be any grievous disappointment for him. If anything mishappens to him, he does not mind it, for he is practising righteousness.

Compare:

"Let him that would live well attain to truth, and then, and not before, he will cease from sorrow."—Plato.

"The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."—Isaiah.

III. *No Devotee of Mine shall ever perish.*

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।  
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

"His soul is filled with righteousness,  
And he attains to lasting Peace;  
For certain know, my devotee  
Is never destroyed, O Kunti's son."

(Gita IX-31)

IV. *Full security for whole-hearted worshippers.*

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।  
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

"But those who worship Me alone,  
Thinking of Me and none else  
To them, the steadfast, I give all  
They need, preserve what they possess."

(Gita IX-22)

In other words, "those who devoutly meditate on Me alone thinking of none else, and who are perfectly harmonised with Me, I look to their safety."

Those earnest devotees who resign everything to Him and think of Him alone, ever active in His service, are always under His protection (See later under "Draupadi Manabhangra outrage").

V. *The last, but not of course the least, promise is Forgiveness of Sins.*

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥



“Leave every dharma of yours,  
And seek refuge in Me alone,  
Whatever your sin I shall release  
You from it. Do not grieve.” (Gita XVIII-66)

That is to say “Abandon all duties and take refuge in Me alone, I will absolve you from all sins.”

In other words, “The only Duty is to reconcile oneself to the Divine Will and Power.”

Samkara advises us to transcend both Dharma and Adharma (धर्मशब्देन अत्र अधर्मोऽपि गृह्यते) and says “one should rise above all these.” Aurobindo also does speak about the abandonment of all standards of duty to take refuge in the Supreme alone.

The climax of the Lord's Teachings is reached in the above promise. He invites each one of us directly to seek Him as our only shelter. Once we are under His protection and feel him as our sole Refuge, we are free from the bonds of actions, which become offerings to the Lord. Being unattached to actions, we are liberated from sins. Then there will be no scope for grief on account of any action.

Accept this life, O Lord, that we may rise higher and feel Thy great protection in our distress and helplessness and be free from sins and sorrows!

“Happy the man who sees a God employed

In all the good and ill that checkers life!”—Cowper.

*Draupadi's Mānabhangā outrage.*

When the gross *mānabhangā* outrage was being perpetrated on Draupadi, the chaste wife of the Pandavas, by the wicked Duhshasana in the open assembly hall, and she was sought to be stripped naked (*Vastrapaharan*) in the presence of her five husbands, all god-born and renowned heroes, and other great men like Bhishma, Drona, Vidura and Vikarna, but who were all unable to save her honour from a sense of false loyalty to Duryodhan, Draupadi with a woman's quick intuition realised that she should rely on Sree Krishna alone.

महत्यापदि संप्राप्ते स्मर्तव्यो भगवान् हरिः ।

“When great calamity befalls, Lord Hari (Sree Krishna) should be thought of.”

Clinging to the last fold of her cloth with her left hand she called on the Lord to come to her rescue, but there was no response. She at once realised that it would not do to rely on the Lord one half and on her left hand one half. So she left off the cloth-fold and raised both hands in reverence to Him, and prayed thus :

शंखचक्रगदापाणे द्वारकानिलयाच्युत ।

गोविन्द पुंडरीकाक्ष रक्ष मां शरणागताम् ॥

"O Lord, armed Thou with Conch, discus and mace, Denizen of Dwāraka, Imperishable Lord, Lotus-eyed Govind, protect me who has sought refuge in Thee!"

हा कृष्ण द्वारकावासिन् कासि यादवनन्दन ।

इमामयस्थां संप्राप्तामनाथां किमुपेक्षसे ॥

"O Krishna, of Dwāraka, Joy of the Yadavas, Where are you? Why do you neglect this helpless creature who has come to this plight?

कृष्ण कृष्ण महायोगिन् विश्वात्मन् विश्वभावन ।

प्रपन्नां पाहि गोविंद कुरुमध्येऽवसीदतीम् ॥

"Krishna, Krishna, great Yogin, Soul and Creator of the Universe, save this suppliant creature perishing in the midst of the wicked Kurus."

Having thus contemplated on Sree Hari, the Lord of the three worlds, that beautiful lady covering her face wept bitterly in her distress, when lo! by His Grace there appeared at that moment when her garment was being pulled off a similar garment many times over and over, and wicked Duhshasana sat down tired and ashamed.

At this "wonder of wonders" there arose a cry of praises and joy spontaneously from the audience, a hundred throats crying out "Govinda, Govinda," and Draupadi was adored as a goddess, and Duryodhan condemned as an "ass", which he has long shown himself to be one by braying like an ass soon after birth.

Karna next told Duhshasana to take the slave Draupadi into the house, and Duhshasana dragged her in the midst of the assembly. Draupadi then appeals thus: "Save me, Bhishma; Drona, Ashwathama, Kripa, save me Vidura, you who are most righteous and who love Dharma," to Dhritrāstra "O great King, save your daughter-in-law, to Gandhari "Why do you not save your own daughter-in-law, who is being harassed? Alas, I, this wretched self, gone under Duryodhan's control, shall perish!"

They were all silent, but the highminded Vidura then addressed Dhritārastra,—“Great King, if you allow Draupadi to be thus harassed, your evil son, along with his counsellors, shall perish in a short time itself on account of the trouble given to the Pandavas, therefore prevent your son, do not court disaster to the whole Kuru race!” Hearing this stupid Dhritārastra did not reply.

Then in that assembly, forcibly impelled by Fate and Folly, without caring for the wise words of Vidura, evil Duryodhan, with eyes expanded in delight, gestured to Draupadi often and often asking her to sit on his lap. At this Draupadi cursed him saying: “since you point to your thigh to me, most evil Duryodhan, you shall have death in your thigh, and since this wicked brother, Duhshasana, harasses me thus, Bhima will drink his blood; and this Karna, most evil-minded, him together with his sons, kinsmen, ministers and attendants, Arjuna shall kill; and this Sakuni, mean in nature, a cheat and an evil-minded fellow, him together with his kith and kin, infuriated Sahadeva shall kill in battle.” When the virtuous Draupadi spoke thus, a very great shower of flowers—*pushpavrishti*—fell from the heavens!

Hearing Draupadi's words the valourous Arjuna seized his Gandiva, jumped up and looked at the enemies. Seeing Arjuna rise up impetuously the compassionate and righteous Yudhisthira, the elder brother, said: “Arjuna do not be rash, let not our fame perish, I can burn these gambler-sinners, but seeing that it is the path of non-truthfulness, my anger dies down. Arjuna, for the sake of the world curb this anger.”

At that time, in the sacrificial-fire hall of Dhritārastra's house, a jackal wailed at the top of its voice and asses and ravens ominously answered it from all sides. Vidura, the Tatwavedi (who knew the true significance of those omens) heard the terrible noise, also Gandhari, Bhishma, Drona and the learned Kripa and they said aloud “Peace, Peace”. Noticing that terrible evil portent and distressed, Gandhari and Vidura informed King Dhritārastra, who said these words: “You are doomed, Duryodhan, ill-behaving fool, you who address a woman and that too Draupadi, the wedded wife of the Pandavas in the open assembly of the Kuru heroes.” Having said so, the wise Dhritārastra said this to Draupadi in conciliatory terms: “Ask of me any boon, Panchali, of what you want, virtuous and one to whom Dharma is everything, you are the most distinguished of my daughters-in-law.” Draupadi asked for three boons, and they were all granted,—“to set free Yudhisthira, the follower of all Dharmas, to set free the Pandava brothers with their chariots and bows; King, avarice ruins Dharma (*lobho*

*dharmasya nāshāya*), my husbands have been rescued and they will by their meritorious deeds (*punya karma*) gain their prosperity." Thereupon Dhritārastra wished welfare to Yudhishthira and said—"Go you all safe and untroubled, permitted by me and with all your riches, rule your own kingdom. Good men remember only the good things done and never the enmities, you have behaved so, the noble soul that you are, in the assemblage of good men, do not bear in your mind Duryodhan's violence. May there be welfare for you and your brothers, may there be amity between you and your brothers, may your mind be set on Dharma!" Next spoke Vidura\*, the pious hearted, thus :

"Best of Bharat's ancient race.

Let me bless thee and thy brothers,  
Souls of truth and righteous grace,  
Fortune brings no weal to mortals,  
Who may win by wicked wile,  
Sorrow brings no shame to mortals  
Who are free from sin and guile!"

And they parted.

"Curses are surer in their action than perhaps the modern nuclear weapons!"

"And Blessings from the true and righteous,  
Brace the feeble fainting hearts!"

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\* Vidura, the lofty-minded, (*Mahāmatī*), was born by Vyasa's *Niyoga* to a Sudra maid-servant of Ambika, and was a partial incarnation of god-Dharma. He was a friend of the Pandavas.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *Destiny vs. Individual Effort.*

Many men recognize the predominance of destiny, while others lay stress on individual effort. Let us give serious thought to this question. In fact each is important in its own sphere. Piety, worldly prosperity, gratification of the senses and Liberation are the four Purusharthas or objects of human pursuit. Of these the first three are mere Purusharthas, while Liberation is the supreme object of human pursuit. Individual effort is the dominant factor in the pursuit of piety and Liberation. He who relegates them to the sphere of Destiny remains deprived of their benefit. In achieving worldly prosperity and gratification of the senses, however, destiny plays the dominant part; individual effort serves only as an exciting cause.

Generally all men put forth strenuous effort for attaining worldly prosperity and even do not hesitate in committing sin for its sake. Even then they are not able to earn as much money as they would, because it cannot be had without the requisite Prarabdha or destiny. In the same way those who have no son strive hard for getting a son; but all are not blessed with a son; for destiny is the main factor here as well.

It has been stated above that individual effort is the main factor in the pursuit of Liberation and piety. Now the question is whether past Karma, *viz.*, that which has begun to bear fruit and that which is lying dormant, are helpful in their pursuit or not. Our reply is that they are helpful no doubt, but they do not play the dominant part. As a result of disinterested action and worship of God performed in past lives one secures the company of saints and exalted souls. And if after meeting them one strives on the lines pointed out by them one is sure to attain blessedness, but not by merely hearing their talks. The Lord says in the Gita:—

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वाऽन्येभ्य उपासते ।

तेऽपि चाक्षितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥

“Not knowing thus, other dull-witted persons however, do worship even as they have heard from others; and even those who are thus devoted to hearing are able to cross the ocean of mundane existence in the shape of death.” (Gita XIII-26)

Therefore, if one's past Karma, *viz.*, that which has begun to bear fruit and that which is lying dormant, is favourable, it gets joined with a striver's efforts for emancipation in his current life. In other words, if the striver has already covered half the distance, he has only to cover the other half in his current life. But even

of his Prarabdha and Sanchita Karmas the latter counts more than the former inasmuch as the other, *viz.*, Prarabdha Karma ceases to function once it has yielded its fruit. But disinterested action and worship done in the past but not yet converted into Prarabdha persist in a dormant state and, gradually accumulating, lead to Liberation. The Lord says:—

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यचायो न विद्यते ।

(First half of Gita II-40)

“In this path (of disinterested action) there is no loss of effort, nor is there fear of contrary result.”

Generally all men covet wealth and sense-enjoyment; but they cannot be had in spite of one's keen desire to have them. But even a keen desire to lead a pious life and realise God is enough to bring the desired result. Fired with an intense longing to cultivate piety he who makes a special effort in this direction attains piety through that effort alone. Therefore, effort is the chief factor in the attainment of piety, which is only another name for doing one's sacred duties. Similarly in the case of a man seized with an intense longing for God-Realization loving effort inspired by such intense longing specially enables him to realize the highest object of human pursuit in the shape of God-Realization.

One's meeting with any living being, object, occurrence or death in this world does not follow one's wish. If one wants to die, one cannot do so by merely wishing to die nor can anyone survive by desiring to survive. In the same way, one does not come by wordly riches and objects, living beings and agreeable occurrences conducive to the gratification of one's senses for the mere seeking, however keenly we long for it; for they do not follow our will. But intense longing entertained for Liberation in the shape of God-Realization is surely realised. Where there is keen longing, effort to realise it is carried on with faith, reverence and love and is also more intense and is therefore crowned with success. Moreover material objects, unconscious as they are, do not reciprocate our desire to secure them; but the Lord does so (*vide* Gita IV-11).

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वदा ॥

“Howsoever men come to Me,  
Even so I grant them their Desires;  
For it's My path, O Pritha's Son,  
That all men follow every way.”

(Gita IV-11)

Now let us consider what is destiny and what is individual effort. Past actions which are responsible for our happiness and misery, gain and loss, victory and defeat, etc., constitute what goes by the name of fate or destiny. Destiny is worked out in three ways, viz., (1) without our seeking, (2) through another's will and (3) by one's own seeking. Contracting some disease, meeting with an accidental death, a fall in the price of a commodity purchased by us, decay or destruction of an object—all these are the result of sins committed in the past. A windfall, etc., on the other hand, are the rewards of virtuous acts. All these fall under the category of reaping the fruit of one's destiny through nobody's will.

Suppose a robber or thief loots or steals our goods or kills us for the sake of money, or another takes our life through malice or a beast or bird injures us or a serpent bites us. All these are instances of our reaping the bitter fruit of our past sins through another's will.

If at the present moment we derive joy through the voluntary gratification of our senses, or make a profit out of some business transaction, this is an instance of our enjoying of our own will the fruit of meritorious deeds done in the past. On the other hand, suffering, loss, defeat, etc., undergone or sustained by us through our own voluntary efforts are instances of our reaping the bitter consequences of our own past sins through our own will.

Prārabdha (fate) covers all the aforesaid cases of reaping the consequences of our past actions.

All conscious acts being done in one's current life fall under the category of individual effort. It is of three kinds—(1) righteous action, (2) unrighteous action and (3) action of a mixed type (both righteous and unrighteous). Righteous action results in happiness, an unrighteous act leads to suffering, while action of a mixed type yields consequences of a mixed type partaking of joy and sorrow both. Says the Gita:

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिथं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम् ।

भवत्यत्याग्निनां प्रेत्य न तु संन्यासिनां कचित् ॥

“Welcome, unwelcome and of a mixed type—threefold, indeed, is the fruit that follows hereafter from the actions of the unrenouncing. But there is none ever for those who have renounced.” (Gita XVIII-12)

If a man performs an action prompted by desire, he gets in return a wife, son, riches, etc., in this world and is rewarded with the attainment of heavenly bliss, etc., in the other. But even a

little effort made by way of one's duty in a disinterested spirit is rewarded by Liberation in the shape of God-Realisation.

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ।

(Latter half of Gita II-40)

“Even a slight attempt made to tread this path of disinterested action renders one immune from the great fear of birth and death.”

A man mostly enjoys freedom of action, but is altogether helpless in reaping the fruit of his action. The Lord Himself says:—

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

(Gita II-47)

“Your right is to work only, but never to its fruit. (Therefore) do not be instrumental in making your actions bear fruit, nor let your attachment be to inaction.”

Therefore a man would do well to pursue his allotted duty in a disinterested spirit. He who does his allotted duty without seeking its reward gets his heart purified and thereby attains Liberation in the shape of God-Realization.

Even in cultivating devotion to God, who is supremely compassionate and most loving, or in dedicating oneself to Him, effort and not destiny is predominant. God is realized through reverent and loving self-surrender to Him. Through reverent and loving dedication one comes to know the truth and secret of God. God is supremely kind-hearted and His compassion extends on all in a limitless measure,—want of knowledge of this secret alone keeps one deprived of God-Realization. Despite His supreme compassion he who does not fully realize it due to lack of faith and reverence fails to know the secret of God's compassion and remains deprived of the supreme benefit resulting from His Kindness.

If it is asked whether God is realized through His grace or through one's own effort, the answer is that when a man puts faith in His extreme kind-heartedness towards him, his spiritual endeavour mounts to a high pitch. On his endeavour attaining to a high pitch his heart gets purified with the result that he comes to know the real character of His supreme compassion and love. And God-Realization now takes place. Supreme compassion and supreme love which cannot be accounted for are what goes by the name of disinterested goodwill. He alone is a disinterested lover who cherishes such goodwill. By knowing Him to be such a lover one attains supreme peace in the shape of God-Realization.



सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ।

“He gaineth peace who knows I am a friend to all the creatures born.”  
(Second half of Gita V-29)

If however, a man relegates God-Realization to the domain of fate, he remains deprived of it ; for no one has so far realized God as a matter of course by depending on one's luck. If Liberation in the shape of God-Realization could be automatically had, everyone would have been liberated till today. If, however, it is argued that God is realized through His grace, it is no doubt true ; but he alone gets the full benefit of His grace who recognises His kindness to himself. Without recognizing His grace ever flowing towards oneself one remains deprived of its benefit. If, for example, a householder has a philosopher's stone in his possession but values it as no more than an ordinary stone, he remains deprived of the benefits accruing from a philosopher's stone. If, on the other hand, he brings it into touch with a piece of iron, knowing it to be a philosopher's stone, he comes to have its benefits. Similarly, God's supreme mercy extends on every living being ; but failing to recognize it in full people remain deprived of its supreme benefit.

In the same way, true knowledge of Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified, does not come by itself through good luck. If such knowledge could be automatically had through one's destiny every one would have attained it. He who depends upon his fate thinking that knowledge of Brahma would come of its own accord through destiny remains deprived of it ; for nobody has attained knowledge of Brahma through destiny till today, nor is it possible to do so. True knowledge of God is attained through the purification of one's heart. The heart is purified through disinterested action, and disinterested action is accomplished through effort alone. The Lord says in the Gita :

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।

तत्त्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥

“On earth there is no purifier as great as Knowledge (of Brahma) ; he who has attained purity of heart through a prolonged practice of Karma-Yoga automatically sees the light of Truth in Self in the course of time.”  
(Gita IV-38)

Another way to the attainment of wisdom is the loving practice of Devotion. The Lord delineates it as follows :—

मयि चित्ता मद्रतप्राणा बोधयंतः परस्परम् ।

कथयंतश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।  
 ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयांति ते ॥  
 तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।  
 नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥

“With their mind fixed on Me, and their lives surrendered to Me, enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me, My devotees ever remain contented and take delight in Me. On those ever united through meditation with me and worshipping Me with love, I confer the Yoga of Wisdom through which they come to Me. In order to shower My grace on them I, who dwell in their heart, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining Light of Wisdom.” (Gita X-9 to 11)

It has already been submitted that Devotion to God too is cultivated through effort. He who practices exclusive devotion to God with reverence and love, recognising His kindness to him and seeking His protection, attains to the highest state in the shape of God-Realisation through His grace.

A third approach to the attainment of spiritual enlightenment lies through the fellowship of and personal service to exalted and enlightened souls who have realized the Truth. The highest state in the shape of Liberation can be reached through this avenue as well.

The Lord says to Arjuna in the Gita :

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।  
 उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥  
 यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहिमेवं यास्यसि पांडव ।  
 येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥

“Understand the true nature of that knowledge by approaching illumined souls. If you prostrate at their feet, render them service and ask questions of them with an open and guileless heart, those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that knowledge. Arjuna, when you have attained enlightenment you will no more fall a prey to delusion. In the light of that knowledge you will see the entire creation first within your own self, and then in Me (the Oversoul).” (IV—34-35)

Even the ways and means of attaining knowledge enumerated in verses 13 to 17 of Discourse XIII of the Gita have been referred to by the Lord under the name of ‘Knowledge’ itself. By recourse to these means too one gets enlightened and attains blessedness.

The practice of all these means of attaining wisdom requires effort and cannot be carried on through luck.

Similarly, the means of securing supreme fixity in Knowledge as described in verses 50-55 of Discourse XVIII of the Gita involve effort. Thus it is proved that in the attainment of Knowledge too effort alone and not destiny plays the chief role.

The practice of virtue in the shape of good conduct requires effort and cannot be carried on through luck. The great sage Manu has referred to the following four as the final authority on Dharma or virtue :—

वेदः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः ।

एतत्चतुर्विधं प्राहुः साक्षात् धर्मस्य लक्षणम् ॥ (Manu II-12)

“The Vedas, the Smritis, the example of the righteous and what is agreeable to one’s own self—the wise declare these as the fourfold index to virtue.”

And describing the character of virtue common to all Manu says :

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।

धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥ (Manu VI-92)

“Firmness, forgiveness, control of mind, non-thieving (external and internal), purity, subjugation of the senses, sound reason, right knowledge, veracity and absence of wrath—these ten are the ten constituents of virtue.”

The special rules of conduct to be observed by the different Varnas (grades of society) and Asramas (stages in life) have also been discussed at length by Manu in Discourses III to VI of his Manusmriti. All these can be observed through effort. None of these can be followed as a matter of course without effort and through luck.

Thus it is proved that while destiny is the dominant factor in the attainment of worldly riches, and procuring sense-enjoyments, individual effort plays the chief role so far as the cultivation of virtue and the attainment of Liberation are concerned.

*Chief Ref:* Jayadaya Goyandaka—Kalyana Kalpataru and by courtesy—The Astrological Magazine, September, 1960.

*Conclusion.*

The Gita has been generally divided into three parts of Six Chapters each, the first of which is believed to be mainly dealing with Karma-yoga, the second with Bhakti-yoga and the third with Jnana-yoga; of these the second group may be said to form the very core of the Gita, as the Lord has laid bare His very heart as it were in these Chapters. Although the central teaching of the Gita is different according to different commentators, and they are all correct according to their own point of view, to an ordinary layman like ourselves devotion or self-surrender to a personal God appears to be the dominant note of the Gita. According to the Gita as viewed by a layman, Sree Krishna is the Supreme Reality and devotion or self-surrender to Him is the crowning endeavour of human life.

India and the Hindus in particular stand in need of the guidance of the Gita more than ever during this critical period of her history, when she is entering on a new phase of her career. India and the Hindu nation are faced with a situation very similar to the one in which Arjuna found himself placed at the beginning of the Mahabharata War. Hostile and disruptive forces are threatening their very existence. The sacred body of Mother India has been carved. Although our long-cherished dream of a free India stands realised today, we have had to pay a very heavy price for it and our rejoicings over the attainment of freedom are mixed with tears for those who have lost their hearth and home, their life and honour and their near and dear ones in the recent outbursts of vandalism and brute passions in some parts of the country. Like Arjuna, the hero of the Mahabharata, the soul of the Hindu India is perplexed today and knows not how to combat the forces of evil that are threatening to engulf us. Our leaders are wavering between action and inaction and advising us to put up with suffering and ignominy at the hands of the ruffians. It is at this crucial moment that we should seek the help of the Gita and try to follow its sublime teachings. The Gita teaches us that our duty lies in squarely facing the evil and suppressing it rather than in countenancing the same. Like Arjuna we should shake off our paltry faint-heartedness and stand up to resist with all our might the forces of evil assailing us on all sides rather than compromise with them. If we listen to the clarion-call of the Gita and follow the lead of the Divine Sree Krishna, who is ever present with us, we should be able in no time to retrieve our lost honour and successfully overcome the forces of evil.

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पश्युपासते ।

श्रद्धधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः ॥

“ Who follow this immortal Dharma  
As I have now described to thee—  
Endued with faith, and I their goal—  
Dear are those devotees to Me.”

(Gita XII-20)

Lead, Kindly Light,  
Amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on !

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“ He that followeth Me,  
Walketh not in darkness.”

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## APPENDIX I.

In Arjuna's Despondency a real dejection? Is it not a Dispassion towards worldly pleasures?

When Arjuna saw his kinsmen gathered on the battle-field, he was overcome with a morbid pity (*Kṛipayāparayā viśtah*) and full of sorrow, addressed Sree Krishna as follows:—

“ Seeing these kinsmen here, O Krishna,  
Assembled, eager for the fight,  
My limbs grow weary, faint, and sink ;  
My mouth is burning hot and dry ;  
A tremor passes through my frame,  
And makes my hair stand on end. (I-29)

“ And Gandiva slippeth from my hand,  
And my skin at every pore burns ;  
I am unable even to stand ;  
My mind is whirling round and round. (I-30)

“ And adverse omens I behold  
Around me, Kesava, everywhere ;  
No good whatever I perceive  
In slaying kinsmen in this war. (I-31)

“ I seek no victory, O Krishna,  
Nor pleasure, nay, nor sovereignty,  
Of what avail is joy to us,  
O Govinda, sovereignty of Life ? (I-32)

“ They, for whose sake do we desire  
Kingdom and joy and pleasures all,  
Are standing here in battle arrayed,  
Renouncing all their wealth and life. (I-33)

*Note.* What Arjuna must have meant here is that even those who selfishly seek pleasures and seek wealth, cannot enjoy in a wholly selfish way all that they seek or win. The organisation of society all over is so based on man's common human nature that it is not possible for any of us anywhere to enjoy either pleasures or wealth in an absolutely self-centred manner. No man is in a position to live absolutely selfishly and altogether for himself, so as to be totally unrelated to the persons as well as the social and other institutions around him. In other words, unless we vitally connect ourselves with the people around us, so that they become thereby the sharers of our joys and of our sorrows, our power to enjoy life and all its worthy opportunities happens to be really next to nothing. So man can never be altogether selfish in his aims ; it is impossible for his life to be wholly confined within himself.

Even a highly selfish man with his love of kingdom or of wealth or enjoyments cannot find any satisfaction in life without the company and sympathy of others; for it is in sharing our advantages with others that the essence of most enjoyments in life is to be found. That being so, and it being a common tendency of human nature to let our kindred and friends become the sharers of our advantages, of our joys and our pleasures, we may easily understand why Arjuna maintains that victory and wealth obtained through the destruction of friends and relatives are not at all worth having.

“ These I do not wish to slay,  
Though Krishna, slain by them I be,  
Even for the kingdom of the three worlds,  
Why for the sake of earth then ? ” (I-35)

“ And slaying Dhritarastra’s sons,  
What joy, O Krishna, ours can be ?  
Sin alone will be our meed (reward)  
By slaying these desperadoes all.” (I-36)

The Samskrit equivalent of “ desperadoes ” is आततायिनः (ātatayinah). Criminals guilty of the following six forms of offence are classed as desperadoes : setting fire to houses (arson), administering poison, attempt to attack with weapons in hand, robbing of wealth, dispossessing the rights over one’s land and possessions, and abduction of women. All these offences have been perpetrated by the Kauravas on the Pandavas (vide Dhritarastra’s soliloquy—ante). Manu says in clear terms “ an attacking desperado must be killed without hesitation and no sin accrues to the slayer thereof.”

“ Therefore ought we not to slay  
Our kinsmen, Dhritarastra’s sons ;  
For who can happiness attain  
By slaying them, O Madhava ? ” (I-37)

“ With mind corrupted through their greed,  
Although they fail to see the harm  
Done when the family decays  
Or sin in treachery to friends. (I-38)

“ Yet wherefore we, who know it all,  
Should not desist from all this sin ?  
Knowing, when family decays,  
What evil comes, Janardana. (I-39)

For when the family decays,  
The eternal family-Dharma dies ;  
Unrighteousness overcometh all  
The family, when Dharma dies, (I-40)

And when unrighteousness prevails,  
The women of the family,  
Become corrupt, and rises then  
The inter-mingling of the castes.

(I-41)

The caste-confusion leads to hell  
The family and its slayers all;  
And fall their ancestors, deprived  
Of water, and offerings of rice."

(I-42)

And by the sin of those who slay  
The family and castes confuse,  
The eternal Dharma of the caste  
And family doth perish all.

(I-43)

And we have, O Janardana,  
Heard that the dwelling place of those,  
The Dharma of whose family  
Is lost, is evermore in hell.

(I-44)

Alas, alas, we are engaged  
In doing a deed of mighty sin,—  
Ready our kinsmen to destroy  
For joy of kingdom in our greed!

(I-45)

"Indeed, if Dhritarastra's sons,  
Weapon in hand should slay me here,  
All unresisting and unarmed,  
That should be better far for me."

(I-46)

So saying Arjuna casts off his Gandiva and sits down in the chariot, his mind overcome with grief.

His arguments for desisting from war are mainly these :

1. Kingdom and pleasures, which he hopes for from victory in the war, were not worth having because those for whose sake they were intended would be killed in war.

2. Killing armed foes in open warfare as in a dharma-yuddha is not sin, on the other hand it is a Duty. But killing one's own kinsmen, though armed, would be decidedly sinful.

3. And when the male members of a race or family are decimated by war, its female members become corrupt and confusion and admixture of castes (*varnasankara*) results with its evil consequences of destruction of race-culture.

These arguments point rather to his dispassion for the enjoyment of the things of this world and of the next, than real despondency or dejection, and form the basis of the yoga or spiritual



union sought for by aspirants; and the role given to Arjuna in the Gita is not that of a hero or warrior but that of an earnest disciple, as later (II-7) on he says :

“I ask Thee, tell me, what is best for me ;

Teach me, Thy pupil, O my Refuge Thou ! ”

Fittingly enough the next Chapter of the Gita deals with Sankhya-yoga, for this dispassion of Arjuna is an indispensable qualification—“a sine—qua non,” of Yoga, moreover “the mood of despair in which Arjuna is found is” says Dr. Radhakrishnan, “what the mystics call ” ‘ the dark-night of the soul ’—an essential step in the upward path.”

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## APPENDIX II.

### *The Philosophy of Activism according to the Iśa Upanishad*

(In a sense the Iśa Upanishad is the gist of all Upanishadic teaching so far as practical life is concerned. It is an integral gospel. The Iśa is comparatively a very short Upanishad, but every word of it is pregnant with meaning. It gives us the knowledge of Brahman and advises us to cultivate a healthy vigorous attitude towards life and its problems. It synthesizes the material as well as the spiritual aspect of life. It does not want us to neglect either. It emphasizes that true knowledge consists in right understanding of both as also their correct relation.)

"Whatever is and moves and has its being in this vast universe is the abode of the Lord, it is the body of the Highest Spirit," thus opens the Iśa Upanishad.

"Therefore enjoy only those things and only as much of them as is given to you by the Lord. Enjoy but with a spirit of renunciation and not with attachment. Covet not what belongs to others," says the sage further on.

"All idleness and inactivity, all tendency to escape from realities are once for all condemned. A man ought to be ambitious of living full one hundred years and of filling those years with incessant and proper activity. In this material world of ours, there is no other way out for us. If we live and act properly and disinterestedly no action can bind us down. If we act thus and adopt this attitude we shall be free from the bondage of Karma or action.

"But Karma or action is not all. We must have knowledge also. We must know the truth, the Atman, the Brahman which is at the root of all this that is visible and invisible. If we fail to know and realize the Atman in this life, we practically waste away a fine and splendid opportunity and the dark worlds await us after our death.

"That Atman, that spirit is unmoving, but is faster than the mind. Even the gods could not reach or catch it. It is all-pervasive and it is there already before anybody else. It is in the inside and in the outside of all things.

"He who realizes that all things are in the Atman and that Atman is in all things, sheds all fear and loves all things as he loves himself. There is a step even beyond this stage. When a wise man sees nothing but the Atman everywhere round about him, when he realizes the unitary life, neither illusion nor misery can mislead or mar his life,

"That Atman which is bodyless and without any blemish whatsoever, that Atman which is pure and spotless and sinless, that which pervades every thing everywhere, creates this mighty universe and lays down the law once and for ever.

"Here are two worlds before us, the material and the spiritual. The material rests on the spiritual and takes its birth from it. The knowledge of both is essential for success in life and for immortality after death. Synthetic and integral knowledge of this as well as the other world, of matter as well as of spirit, and of their right and real relation is essential if we are to live a complete life and depart hence for the eternal home of the spirit.

"Spiritual truth is often covered over, indeed, by the shining material world of the senses and we are often overwhelmed by the latter and led astray. But we must pray to God to discover for us the truth behind the world of senses and lead us to the life of the spirit. The sun-god is the symbol of spiritual light and illumination. The truth that shines in him and in us is the same. That is the One Spirit.

"This body falls off at death and the spirit is led to its eternal home when freed from the bondage of desire."

This in brief is the teaching of the *Iśa Upanishad*.

Chief Ref: R. R. Diwakar.

(*Upanishads in Story and  
Dialogue—Hindkitabs, Ltd.,  
Bombay*).

1. यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतानि

आत्मैवाभूद् विजानतः ।

तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः

एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

(*Iśa Up. 7.*)

"But One Lord is the object of all Devotion, but One Lord is the subject of all Wisdom, but One Lord is the source of all Activity; One Lord and therefore one Humanity, One Lord and therefore one-ness through the entire body of the Lord; One Lord, one world, one brotherhood; that is the outcome of our study. Thus on from age to age, from universe to universe; and when I say again, where is grief, where is delusion, when we have thus seen That One-ness?" (Dr. Annie Besant.)

2. "All our actions should be intended for the sake of the Society and the world, and the Activism about which we speak should be particularly in relation to society and the world."

(Dr. K. N. Katju)

3. "Self-realisation means realisation of one's self in the wider life of our fellow-men, and there cannot be self-realisation without the integration of the individual self with the larger social self." (H. V. Divetia)

4. "Service of Humanity is a form of worship of God, which can be practised by persons of all religious faiths; and for rationalists such service is the sole religion." (H. V. Divetia)

5. "Contented with what chance brings, transcending, the pairs of opposites, free from jealousy, and unperturbed in success and failure. he is not bound though performing actions."

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## APPENDIX II-A:

### *Spot-lights on the Unity of the Three Paths.*

The so-called three paths are really one. The paths that are known as Knowledge, Devotion and Action, all ultimately tend to the realisation of God.

1. Says Dr. Annie Besant<sup>(1)</sup> :

"We see the three paths within the one, and according to the dominant temperament will be the path that is chosen. For him who is full of emotion the best way is the way of Devotion (Bhakti); for him who is by temperament inclined to wisdom the way of Knowledge (Jnana) is the best; and for him who is temperamentally inclined to action the path of Action (Karma) will be the best."

"For the path men take from every side is Mine" (Gita, IV-11).

2. Writes K. M. Munshi<sup>(2)</sup> :

"Shining examples of greatness throughout history have followed this path in all lands. Many have stumbled. Some have reached the goal. Among those who have reached the goal are: Sri Samkara, who stresses the path of Knowledge; Calvin who stresses the path of Action, and as such is the Father of the Christian Reformation, who made Protestantism a living force; and St. Augustine, the second great founder of Christianity, known for his great devotion and passionate ardour for surrender to God."

"A scrutiny of the lives of the above discloses how perfection has been practised and attained."

"Sri Samkara leads the World's thought in laying emphasis on Knowledge and Renunciation. By reason of this emphasis the human Gospel of Gita has come to be understood as the Message of Knowledge and Renunciation."

"John Calvin was a man of action. He organised the European Reformation and laid the foundation of the broad and liberal movement which the Protestant Church represented in Europe. He made Protestantism a living force in Europe."

"St. Augustine, one of the four great fathers of the Latin Church, was a man of love and devotion. He was passionate by nature and an ardent lover, His God called to him. He ran out

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(1) Four Lectures on the Gita--Adyar.

(2) Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life. B.V.B. Publication, Bombay-7.

of his house, flung himself under a fig tree. A Voice bade him to surrender himself to God and he did so. What we find in his Confessions is the enthusiasm and passionate ardour to surrender himself to God, which is Bhakti-Yoga.

"The study of these great characters shows that Knowledge, Action and Devotion are the inalienable aspects of the fundamental unity of human nature."

3. Dr. Aldous Huxley in his *Perennial Philosophy* speaks of three types of men. These three types are physio-psychological in character; the cerebral type; which stresses the activity of the head, belongs to the path of Knowledge; the cardiac type which stresses the heart, belongs to the path of Devotion; and the muscular type, which stresses the hand, belongs to the path of Action—shortly termed "The Three H's of Huxley."

4. Dr. S. K. Belvalkar,<sup>(3)</sup> very happily has called this triunepath by the expression—*Jnana Bhakti Karma Samuchhaya*. "We have hitherto seen" writes Dr. R. D. Ranade,<sup>(4)</sup> "in works on Indian Philosophy only *Jnana Karma Samuchhaya*, but we compliment Dr. Belvalkar upon his having introduced that word 'Bhakthi' in the scheme and called it a triune unity of Jnana, Bhakthi and Karma." ❧

5. Dr. K. N. Katju in his Lectures on the Bhagavad Gita delivered at Nimbai in 1954 has pointed out that "all our actions should be intended for the sake of the Society and the world at large. These constitute my God", he said. "In fact this is a point which he stressed throughout his life as well as particularly in his Lectures on Karma-yoga in the Gita at Allahabad. The activism about which he spoke was particularly in relation to Society and the World." (Ranade).

(3) The Bhagavad Gita by Dr. S. K. Belvalkar, M.A., Ph. D.

(4) The Bhagavad Gita, as a Philosophy of God-realisation. Published by the Nagpur University only in April, 1959.

## APPENDIX III.

### *Is Mahabharata Historical or Allegorical?*

Mahatma Gandhi tells us on this point that ever since he was acquainted with Sir Edwin Arnold's translation of the Gita, called "Song Celestial," in 1888-89, he had felt that it was not a historical work. "I do not regard Mahabharata," he tells us, "as a historical work in the accepted sense of the term." This does not mean that the persons in the Mahabharata are not historical, but the many situations, dialogues, speeches, interpretations, conclusions and so forth need not necessarily be regarded as historical. They are what the great Vyasa has put into the mouths of the great actors. The following arguments are advanced by Gandhiji for regarding the Mahabharata as *allegorical*:

1. Sree Vyasa ascribes to many of the heroes of the Epic either sub-human or super-human origins. These cannot be regarded as historical in any sense, e.g., Bhishma was the son of the Gangā, Karna from Sun-god, Dharma from Yama-Dharma (God of Death), Bhima from Vayu (Wind-god) and Agastya from a pitcher.

2. As Mahadeva Desai has put it, it is permissible to poets, dramatists and historians to ascribe imaginary characters to historical persons. For example, Thucydides, the great historian, who has by general consent been regarded as a very conscientious historian, has not hesitated to introduce imaginary dialogues or to invent speeches for his characters in order to elucidate the different situations. He says he has deliberately done so in order that the lesson might be well impressed on the minds of his readers.

3. As Mahatmaji says, if we interpret the Epic more in an allegorical than in a historical sense, then the Bhagavad Gita itself might be taken to represent the moral duel that is perpetually going on inside us. Historical names have been introduced by the author of the great Epic only to drive home ethical and religious principles. For example, the Pandavas were regarded as forces of light, the Kauravas as forces of darkness and the Kurukshetra as the human body in which they played their part. Arjuna and Krishna might themselves allegorically be taken to represent the "individual ego and the great In-dweller."

In this way, according to Mahatmaji, we have to interpret both the Mahabharata and the Gita more in an allegorical than in a historical sense.

This naturally takes us to the next question—"Was there any historical personality of the name "Krishna," the Author of the Bhagavad Gita?"

## APPENDIX IV-A.

*Was there any historical personality of the name Krishna, the Author of the Gita?*

Much doubt, however, exists about the personality of Sree Krishna himself, the Author of the Bhagavad Gita. For example, in the Chandogya Upanishad (3500 B.C.) there is mentioned Krishna, the Son of Devaki (देवकी) who received spiritual enlightenment from Ghora Angirasa, a Yogi, and if we consider the connection of the Chandogya Upanishad with the Rigveda (5000 B. C.) we shall see that Krishna is already mentioned twice in the latter as a Rishi in a hymn to the Ashvins. This Rishi Krishna is also named Angirasa in the *anukramanika* (Preface) of the Rigveda, and the name Ghora Angirasa itself occurs in a passage in the Rig Veda in a hymn to Surama. (R. D. Ranade).

In the Mahabharata Krishna is the King of Dwaraka and in the Vishnu-Purana, we find a description of Krishna playing with the Gopis.

Again, in the Bhagavata, the account of Rasakreeda is detailed at length.

In very ancient times in India there was in vogue a festival—Madanotsava (celebration in honour of Madana, Cupid). This very thing was transformed into "Dola" and thrust on the shoulders of Krishna. Who can boldly assert that the Rasakreeda and other things connected with Krishna were not similarly fastened on him?

In very ancient India there was very little tendency to find out truths by historical research; so any one could say what he thought best without substantiating it with proper facts, and evidence.

In those ancient times there was very little hankering after name or fame among men, and so it often happens that one man composed a book and made it pass current in the name of another, his Guru or some great person, and it is human nature also to build round the real character of a great man all sorts of imaginary supernatural attributes. In such cases it is very hazardous for the investigator of the historical facts to get at the truth.

In ancient times they had no knowledge of geography, and imagination ran riot, and so we meet with such fantastic creations of the brain as milk-ocean, clarified-butter ocean, and so on.

In the Puranas we find one living ten thousand years, another a hundred-thousand. But the Vedas mention only a hundred years' life-span to human beings.

Whom are we then to follow? So, to come to a correct conclusion in the case of Krishna is well-nigh impossible.

(Swami Vivekananda. "Thoughts on the Gita")



#### APPENDIX IV-B.

Regarding the historicity or otherwise of the Kurukshetra battle itself no special evidence in support of it can be adduced, but there is no doubt that there was a war formerly between the Kurus and the Pandavas; but the question is asked, "How could there be so much discussion about Jñāna, Bhakthi and Yoga on the battlefield where the huge army stood arrayed ready for the fight just awaiting for the last signal? And was there then a shorthand writer to note down every word of the converse between Sree Krishna and Arjuna in the din and turmoil of the battlefield?"

According to some authorities the Kurukshetra battle is only an allegory, and when we sum up its esoteric significance, it means the war, which is constantly going on within man between the tendencies of good and evil. This meaning too may not be irrational.

(Swami Vivekananda—"Thoughts on the Gita")

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## APPENDIX V-(1)

### *Universality of the Great Religions of the World.*

Says Sree Krishna :

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।

त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥ (Gita IV-9)

“My birth Divine and Actions, he  
Who knoweth in their essence, all,—  
Leaving his body is not re-born,  
But cometh unto me, O Arjuna.”

That is to say, “He who knows my Divine birth and action truly, does not take re-birth after death but comes to Me.”

(Gita IV-9)

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

मम वर्तमानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥ (Gita IV-11)

“Howsoever men worship Me  
Even so do I fulfil their desires ;  
For it's my path, O Pritha's son,  
That men tread in all ways.”

In other words :

“I serve men in the way in which they approach Me, the Paths, O Partha, men take all round are Mine.”

God prevails everywhere, He is omnipresent, He is the Lord of all. He is the Life, the Force, the Current, that passes through all that exists.

He is the Sustainer of all. He Himself is the Essence that manifests itself as Life. He does not belong to this land or that, nor to this creed or that. No one particular way can, therefore, be said as leading to Him. The mode of worship may be different, the Truth that is to be realised is the same. It is the same in Christianity, in Islam, in Hinduism, and so in other great religions of the World. Bliss, the Peace of Mind, is of a single type only, the paths to achieve it differ here and there in their outward form, the Goal is the same.

“To but one Goal are marching everywhere,  
All human beings, though they may seem to walk,  
On paths divergent, and that Goal is I,  
The Universal Self, Self-Consciousness.” (Gita IV-11)

“As many souls, so many ways to God”

(Hadis, sayings of Muhammad)

" Veda and Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Shaiva-view,  
And Vaishnava, and many others such,  
Men follow as they variously incline ;  
Some thinking this is best ; some others, that ;  
Yet Thou art the One Goal of all those Ways,  
Some straight and easy, others crooked, rough,  
As of the countless streams, the one Vast Sea."

(Shiva Mahima Stuthi.)

" As streaming rivers pass into the Sea,  
Abandoning all separate name and form,  
So, he who sees the One casts off all name  
And form, and merges in the State Beyond."

(Upanishads.)

" Cows are many different colours, but  
The milk of all is of one colour, white ;  
So the proclaimers who proclaim the Truth  
Use many varying forms to put it in,  
But yet the Truth enclosed in all is One."

(Upanishads.)

" Jesus put many cloths of many hues  
Into one jar, and out of it they came  
With all their hues washed off all clean and white,  
As seven-colored rays merge in white light."

(Sufi Writings.)

Let the great Truths of the Universal Teachings of the above verses of the Gita and other sacred works be learnt by all Creeds and Communities, and if we should understand them fully the changing world of to-day would be a much better place to live in. For this purpose the ideal thing to be accomplished would be to bring about harmony and reconciliation among all religions of the world especially those that made exclusive claims.

The word ' Religion ', which is in use in the Christian World, is derived from the two Latin words—(Re=again and ligare=to bind)—and means ' to bind back ', or " That which binds human beings to each other in the bonds of love and sympathy and mutual rights and duties, binds them all, also to God; endeavours to lead them back to That World-Soul, from whom their lower nature makes them stray away again and yet again, in too eager following of the objects of the senses."

The corresponding Vedic equivalent is " Dharma," (dhr=to hold and bind together) which has exactly the same significance as " Religion "—

"That which leads beings out of the World's woes,  
And 'holds them fast' in highest Bliss, is Dharma."

(Samanta Bhadra.)

The Vaisheshika philosophers' definition is, "that which helps to achieve *abhyudaya* (prosperity) here, and also *nishreyas* (the highest happiness) hereafter, that is Dharma; the joys of earth and heaven, and the bliss of realised infinitude and immortality, during the life on earth and thereafter too.

"That which binds fast all beings, each to each,  
With bonds of rights-and-duties, binding these  
Also together, in unfailing law.  
Of Action and Reaction, whence arises  
Reward for good and punishment for ill,  
And thus preserves mankind—Dharma is that,"

(Mahabharat—Shanti-Parva.)

*Teachers sent to every race.*

1. "God sends His Teachers unto every age,  
To every clime and every race of men,  
With revelations fitted to their growth  
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of truth,  
Unto the selfish rule of one, sole race,  
Therefore each form of worship that hath swayed  
The life of man, and given it to grasp  
The Master-Key of Knowledge, Reverence,  
Enfolds some germs of goodness and of right,  
Else, never had the eager soul, which loathes  
The slothful down of pampered ignorance,  
Found it in even a moment's fitful rest."

(I. Russel Lowell-Rhacus.)

2. "Great Teachers confirm, at more supplement, not supplant one another."
3. Confucius of China says:  
"I only hand on, I cannot create new things."
4. "Is there anything whereof it may be said,  
See, this is new? It hath been already  
Of old time, which was before us  
..... There is nothing new under the sun." (B. Eccles.)
5. Christ (i.e., the Anointed with Divine Wisdom) says:

"I come not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them."  
(Bible)

6. Sree Krishna says to Arjuna :

"I expounded this Eternal Yoga-doctrine to vivaswat, he taught it to Manu and the latter to Ikshwaku. Thus the royal sages came to know this; but O, terror of foes, on account of long lapse of time the doctrine passed into oblivion. The same ancient doctrine has now been expounded to you as you are My devotee and Comrade. This is the grandest secret."

(Gita IV-1, 2 & 3.)

"All is always present in the memory of God, the Omniscient, Omni-potent, Omni-present, Universal Self, the One Principle of all Life and Consciousness."

"The royal Saints, the King Philosophers,  
Of ancient days, from one unto another,  
Did pass this Wisdom on, from age to age;  
That same Eternal Yoga, Ancient Wisdom,  
Have I declared to thee, this day to strengthen  
Thy mind and heart for Life's perpetual strife." (Gita.)

The Arabic-Persian words:

"Muhammad" means "The Praiseworthy," "Paigham-bar,"—"The Message-bearer," and "Rasul"—"sent by the Spirit."

7. "This that I am now uttering unto you,  
The Holy Quran—it is to be found  
Within the ancient Seers' writings too;  
For Teachers have been sent to every race  
Of human beings no community  
Is left without a warner and a guide.  
And aught of difference we do not make—  
For disagreement there is none betwixt them—  
Between these Prophets. All that have been sent,  
Have been so sent but One Truth to proclaim." (Quran.)

8. "In varying ways the Sages have described  
The same unvarying and essential truths;  
There is no real conflict twixt them all;  
The Knowers know the Way to reconcile.  
Many the words and Ways in which the wise  
Have tried to teach One Truth to all mankind  
Each Way, each word, is right in its own place,  
There is no conflict twixt them at all,  
The sages see and say the same in each. (Bhagavata.)

The obvious significance of the above quoted remarkable Texts is :

(1) That the Essentials are common to all Great Religions;

(2) That Truth is Universal, and not the monopoly of any race or Teacher;

(3) That the same fundamental truths have been revealed by God in different Scriptures, in different languages, through different Seers born in different nations and at various times.

“Let all of us ascend towards, and meet  
Together on, the Common ground of those  
High Truths and principles which we all hold.” (Quran.)

“By which the One, unperishing,  
In every creature is perceived,—  
Inseparate in each separate thing,—  
Know *Sattvic* is that knowledge all.” (Gita XVIII-20.)

“That which in every creature sees  
But different things of different forms,  
And all as separate, each from each,—  
Of *Rajas* is that knowledge called.” (Gita XVIII-21.)

*Note.*—The Arabic-Persian word for ‘man’ is *insan* which means ‘friend of all’, ‘the lover of his kind’, ‘the gentleman’.

So the Samskrit word ‘Arya’ means ‘the person to whom others, when trouble befalls them, go for relief,’ ‘he who is approached for help.’

“He who is worthy to go to, for help,  
For persons in distress, and unto whom  
Such ever do resort—true Arya, he.”

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## Religions of the World—Harmony of all Religions Stressed.

Inaugurating the Seventh Annual Conference of the Fellowship of Friends of Truth (F.F.T.) at Gandhigram on the 28th April, 1960, Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar showed how the mind of India always sought unity in diversity and particularly stressed the teachings of Sri Sankara in this connection. He also referred to modern scientific developments which proved that matter was ultimately an illusion and came from Energy, which was all pervasive in the universe. Therefore what was crumbling before the advancement of science was not religion or spirituality but materialism. Religion has now to meet new challenges in a changing world and all regions must come together in mutual understanding and harmony. He had profound faith, he said, that religion would continue to play a vital role in the new world that was shaping. *There were priceless treasures in every religion and all these treasures belonged equally to all men and women.* He pleaded for much more than mere tolerance for understanding and harmony among the various religions and concluded by wishing that the F.F.T. would grow from strength to strength and would bring together devotees of the different religions in the common quest for the good life of all.

Dr. R. R. Divakar, Chairman, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, recalled how Mahatma Gandhi had insisted that the basis of the F.F.T. should be equal reverence for each other's religion. Religions like Buddhism and Jainism might be considered, he said, as Godless religions, but they also stood for the reality of the Atma and therefore of Truth and Love. He stressed that reconciliation between, religions which made exclusive claims should begin by mutual understanding and then going up tomony among them and finally to a new spiritual synthesis.

Mr. G. Ramachandran said that there was no question that different religions made exclusive claims. These should be studied carefully. It would be the task of the Conference then how to lessen disharmony and intolerance among the religions. No one was called upon to give up his religion, but every one should re-examine his or her own religious tradition and give a courageous lead in effecting a reconciliation. This would not be easy but would require the highest courage and truthfulness. He expressed the confidence that religious leaders who had agreed to participate in the discussion would make a real contribution in evolving a new level of thinking and conviction in the direction of greater harmony and understanding.

(“The Hindu”—May 5, 1960.)

1. "Father of All in every age  
In every clime adored  
By Saint, by savage and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove or Lord.  
To Thee whose temple is all space,  
Whose altar is all earth, sea, skies,  
One chorus let all beings raise,  
All nature's incense rise." (Pope.)

2. "Human beings, all, are as head, arms, trunk and legs  
unto one another." (Vedas.)

3. "No man liveth unto himself. We are all parts of one  
another. God hath made of one blood all nations that dwelt upon  
the face of the earth." (Bible.)

4. "All creatures are members of the one family of God." (Quran.)

In his book, entitled "Essential Unity of All Religions"\* (VI Ed., 1960—with the Foreword of Dr. Rajendra Prasad)—the late Dr. Bhagavan Das of Varanasi establishes with mellow wisdom that there is an enduring basis of unity between the thoughts, ideals and aspirations of all the great living religions of the world. This latent harmony is symbolised by their basic tenets of love and fellowship, compassion, sympathy and goodwill to all created beings. He has brought to light with unerring understanding and insight the underlying affinity and identity of religious experience and doctrines by adducing numerous parallel texts from the revered books, poems and Scriptures of the Eleven major extant religions of the world.

The following are the Extracts of Opinions and Reviews on the above book:—

(i) "It is easy to perceive in a vague way the essential unity of all the great religions of the World and to hold that differences in forms of worship or in names do not matter. But to arrive at this truth through actual research and analytical study requires the scholarship and untiring application of a man like Dr. Bhagavan Das, the venerable philosopher of Banaras.....Dr. Bhagavan Das's book is similarly the product of very laborious study and analysis and is not merely the formulation of a good and likely idea. It is a great book that the Doctor has given to philosophers and pious man for reverent study."

(C. Rajagopalachari.)



(ii) "If the world is to be brought together it is only on the basis of mutual understanding, especially in matters of fundamental belief. Any book which points out that there is a transcendent unity of religions inspite of empirical diversity helps towards inter religious understanding. Pursuit of wisdom, i.e., philosophical understanding of the nature of ultimate reality and the practice of love irrespective of distinction of caste, creed and community, these are the basic assumptions of all living faiths. Dr. Bhagavan Das with his encyclopedic knowledge of the origin and growth of different religions has in his book made a notable contribution towards the bringing of people together on the plane of mind and spirit. It is my earnest hope that his book will be read by young and old in all parts of the world."

(Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.)

(iii) "I value your book highly, as I believe that the appreciation of the beauties of the great Faiths is one of the most potent means of promoting international understanding upon which the structure of enduring peace can be built. I trust means will be found to give the book widest circulation."

(Hon'ble Justice Zafrulla Khan.)

(iv) *The One Way to Peace on Earth.*

Religion, instead of "binding mankind together in ties of love and brotherliness" as the word implies has been a fruitful cause of discord and strife between different groups of men. Time was when there were not only crusades and *jehāds* fought in the name of religion between countries and nations but also persecution of individuals who had the courage to adopt and follow other religions or not to conform to the tenets and practices of the orthodox within the fold of the same religion. The reason was that people had not cared to study and understand the fundamentals of different religions, and, instead of appreciating their essential unity, laid emphasis on differences of form. In modern times religion may have lost some of its hold on the mind of millions of men and women, but its potentiality for mischief has not altogether disappeared.

While religion as a cause of Wars between nations and countries has receded to some extent in the background, nationality based on race and territory has taken its place. The desire for material well-being and prosperity of a nation added, another important and significant factor—the economic factor—as an incentive and justification for one nation fighting against another. The world has not yet outgrown this phase in human history.

In the world of to-day another equally important, equally significant, and equally strong motive is supplied by different ideologies regarding the ideal to be pursued and the method by which it can be achieved for the well-being and prosperity of man. This has gripped mankind at the present moment.

These three dominant elements are not exclusive, and run in to one another in determining man's actions, but also, in point of time and space, have been operating together with more or less force at all times and in all countries. The world to-day, is not immune against them and in fact, is witnessing their action, reaction and interaction in many countries simultaneously.

Every rational and thoughtful human being particularly after the experience of two devastating world-wars and on account of the apprehension of a third, even more devastating war-believes that peace is indispensable and necessary for individual as well as social and collective prosperity and progress and general well-being. The causes, therefore, which lie at the root of conflicts which disturb peace between nations should be eliminated as far as possible. Religion being one such potent cause, which has led to bitter conflicts, wars, and massacres throughout history and from which all countries including India, have suffered and continue to suffer more or less even today, deserves to be studied so that the element in it which brings about conflict is eliminated. The animosities engendered should be allayed; and nothing would help the cause more or better than the study of the essentials of all religions. Such a book is "The Essential Unity of All Religions" by Dr. Bhagavan Das.

(Extract from the Foreword by Dr. Rajendra Prasad.)

#### (v) *The Unity of All Religions*

Every religion tells its followers (1) what to think or believe, (2) what to desire or feel and (3) what to do. Under the subdivision of *Knowledge* every religion teaches the existence of One Supreme Spirit. The Nature of this Universal Spirit, hidden in the heart of every living thing, is described in almost the same terms in the teachings of every religion, the Vedanta of Hinduism, the *rahasya* teachings of the Buddha and Jina to their *Arhat* disciples, the *gnosis* of the Christians, the *tasawuf* of Islam.

Another belief common to all Religions is the belief in other worlds than this. Yet another common item of belief is the existence of different grades of spiritual beings dwelling in and governing those different worlds. Finally, all religions teach more or less distinctly, that the human soul being a portion of the Divine Being has emanated from it and will go back to it some day after

passing through various experiences of good and evil, virtues and joys, sins and sufferings in various worlds.

It may be borne in mind that without the inspiration of religion, without spiritual earnestness and purity of character, without benevolence and philanthropy no nation can attain genuine civilisation.

Whatever promotes moral and friendly relations between individuals or between nations is of the very essence of universal religion. It alone enables men to realise in life the Common Self of all.

We may see thus that the Hindu Vedanta, the Christian *gnosis* (or Gnosticism) and the Muslim *tasawuf*—which teach that the Spirit in all is one and the same and that therefore men should and ultimately must love each other—are not the vain vision of idle dreamers but the most practical of all practical politics, and the answer of all religions to the question, "What to feel," "Feel love for and for each living creature."

The second part of the book of every religion is called Ethics (Science of Morals). The third part is the Answer to the question 'What to do?'. It may be named the part of special rights and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments and special directions. Each religion has a set of sacraments, some fewer, some more numerous, which may be divided into antenatal (before birth), post-natal (after birth) and post-mortem (or after death). The purpose of all these is to purify and consecrate the grosser and subtler bodies inhabited by the human soul in such a manner has to make its life here and hereafter higher, richer and nobler and enable it to attain to even greater and greater perfection and communion with God.

(Chief ref. :—Review of the above book in the "Hindu", Madras, on Sunday, Aug. 13, 1961 by Dr. M. Hafiz Syed, M.A., Ph.D., D. Litt.)

## APPENDIX—V (2)

### 3. *Perennial Philosophy of Aldous Huxley*

At the core of the Perennial Philosophy we find four fundamental doctrines:

I. The phenomenal world of matter and of individualised consciousness—the world of things and animals and men and even gods—is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be non-existent.

II. Human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realise its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.

III. Man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.

IV. Man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal Self and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground.

In Hinduism the first of these four doctrines is stated in the most categorical terms. The Divine Ground is Brahman, whose creative, sustaining and transforming aspects are manifested in the Hindu Trinity. A hierarchy of manifestations connects inanimate matter with man, gods, High Gods and the undifferentiated God-head beyond.

In Mahayana Buddhism the Divine Ground is called Mind or the Pure Light of the void, the place of the High Gods is taken by the Dhyani-Buddhas.

Similarly conceptions are perfectly compatible with Christianity and have in fact been entertained, explicitly or implicitly, by many Catholic or Protestant mystics, when formulating a philosophy to fit facts observed by super-rational intuition.

Within the Mohamedan tradition one has the impression, while reading certain Sufi texts, that their authors did in fact conceive of *al haqq*, the Real, as being the Divine Ground of unity of Allah, underlying the active and personal aspects of the God-head.

The second doctrine of the Perennial Philosophy—that it is possible to know the Divine Ground by a direct intuition higher than discursive reasoning—is to be found in all the great religions of the world. A philosopher who is content merely to know about the ultimate Reality—theoretically and by hearsay—is compared by Buddha to a herdsman of other men's cows.

Mohammed uses an even homelier barn-yard metaphor. For him the philosopher who has not realised his metaphysics is just an ass bearing a load of books.

Christian, Hindu and Taoist teachers (Chinese Philosophers) write no less emphatically about the absurd pretensions of mere learning and analytical reasoning.

In the words of the Anglican Prayer Book, our eternal life, now and hereafter, "stands in the knowledge of God," and this knowledge is not discursive but "of the heart"—a super-rational intuition, direct, synthetic and timeless.

The third doctrine of the Perennial Philosophy, that which affirms the double nature of man, is fundamental in all the higher religions. The unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground has, as its necessary condition, self-abnegation (Self-denial) and Charity. Only by means of self-abnegation and we charity can we clear away the evil, folly and ignorance which constitute the thing we call our personality and prevent us from becoming aware of the spark of Divinity illuminating the inner man. But the spark within is akin to the Divine Ground. By identifying ourselves with the spark of Divinity we can come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground.

Hindus categorically affirm that "thou art That" (तत्त्वमसि) that the indwelling Atman is the same as Brahman.

In regard to man's final end, all the higher religions are in complete agreement. The purpose of human life is the discovery of Truth, the unitive knowledge of Godhead. The degree to which this unitive knowledge is achieved here on earth determines the degree to which it will be enjoyed in the posthumous state (state occurring after death). Contemplation of truth is the end, action the means. In India, in China, in ancient Greece, in Christian Europe, this was regarded as the most obvious and axiomatic piece of orthodoxy.

The above four doctrines constitute the Perennial Philosophy in its minimal and basic form. A man who can practise Jnana Yoga (the metaphysical discipline of discrimination between the real and the apparent) asks for nothing more. The simple working hypothesis is enough for his purpose. But such discrimination

is exceedingly difficult and can hardly be practised, at any rate, in the preliminary stages of the spiritual life, except by persons endowed with a particular kind of mental constitution. That is why most statements of the Perennial Philosophy have included another doctrine, affirming the existence of one or more human incarnations of the Divine Ground, by whose mediation and grace the worshipper is helped to achieve his goal—that unitive knowledge of the Godhead, which is man's eternal life and beatitude.

Krishna is an Incarnation of the Divine Ground in human form. Similarly in Christian and Buddhist theology Jesus and Gautama are Incarnation of divinity.

Worship of the Incarnation and contemplation of his attributes are for most men and women the best preparation for unitive knowledge of the Godhead.

From the above it must be clear to the reader that the Perennial Philosophy and its corollaries constitute a Highest Common Factor present in all the major religions of the World. And the Bhagavad Gita is perhaps the most systematic spiritual statement of the Perennial Philosophy.

(Chief ref. :—Aldous Huxley's "Introduction to the Bhagavad Gita" by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood.)

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## APPENDIX—V (3)

### *Religion of Jesus Christ*

The real mother-tongue of Jesus was the Syrian dialect mixed with Hebrew, which was the spoken language of Palestine. Jesus knew nothing about the Greek culture, nor about Judaism, and though Renan has observed that the asceticism of the Essenes or the Therapeutæ, together with the fine output of religious philosophy, advanced by the Jewish School of Alexandria, were unknown to him, yet from the "Letter" of the Esseer (written seven years after crucifixion by a personal friend of his in Jerusalem to an Esseer or Essene Brother in Alexandria) it is evident that Jesus was admitted into the Order of the Essenes, together with John, in their early manhood. He was baptised by Jobanan or John in Jordan near the shore of the Dead Sea, John used to lead the life of Yogi of India.

The Essenes or Therapeutæ lived near the birth place of John, on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. "He preached", says Dr. Radhakrishnan "the Essene tenets of righteousness, towards God and mercy towards fellowmen. His insistence on baptism was in accord with the practice of the Essenes. Jesus was influenced greatly by the tenets of the Essenes. Before His appearance in Galilee, Jesus worked as a disciple of John, and He practised baptism. He looked upon John as His Master and forerunner, as the greatest among those born of women. Both preached salvation by the forgiveness of sins. Jesus' emphasis on non-resistance to evil may be due to the Essenes."

Marcus has said that John baptised in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. John was clothed with camel's hair, with a girdle of skin about his loins, and he did eat locusts and wild honey. This also finds support of St. Mathew, the author of the First Gospel.

We learn the following from the English translation of a manuscript for the Freemasons, appended in the book: *The Crucifixion* by an eye-witness: "We know with certainty, and the writings of the Evangelists do not deny it, but on the contrary strengthen this fact, that Master's great predecessor, John, from his infancy, was adopted and brought up in the School of the Essene Order," and this Order was quite different from those of the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

The term "Sadducees" having been derived from the proper name Zodik, means either descendants or followers of Zodik. The term "Pharisees" means "the separated". The Pharisees

were so called because they were distinguished, and whenever religion seemed to require it, were "separated" from the common multitude."

The Sadducees formed a social Order, and were connected with political as well as religious matters. The Pharisees liked to call themselves as 'the wise', the learned. And so the Sadducees can be compared to the Epicureans, and the Pharisees to the Stoics. But the Essenes were purely the ascetics, who devoted their lives to the practice of spiritual *sadhana* like the Indian Yogis.

: Dr. Kuenen has collected the historical data from the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus regarding the mode of religious lives of the ascetic Essenes, and has elaborately discussed them in his celebrated work: *The Religion of Israel*. He has said that the Essenes were habituated to rise before sunrise, and used to perform their morning prayers, with their faces turned towards the east, as if they were imploring the sun to appear. When the day had broken they went to their works: agriculture, cattle-breeding, bee-keeping and other peaceful trades were their ordinary occupations. Their working dresses were simple; in the winter, hairy mantles, and in the warm season, under-garments without sleeves. They remained at their works until eleven o'clock in the forenoon. Then they used to take their baths, after which they put on the proper dresses of their Order, white linen, and assembled for the common meal. The meal was eaten solemnly, preceded by a prayer from the leaders, and a song of praise, and closed with a song of praise. It was further a very plain meal, consisting of bread and always one single dish of vegetable food; they abstained from meat and wine. When the meal was over, the works of the day were resumed and pursued till sunset. In fact, the duties of the Essenes were to enlighten themselves first, and then to serve mankind at large, such as to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, comfort the sick; visit, assist and comfort, aid and protect the widows and fatherless.

Thus we find that the mode of religious and spiritual life pursued by the Essenes, was similar to that of the devout Christian, Buddhist and Hindu monks of our own days. It appears as a distant echo of the dictum:

*Atmāno mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya cha* (=for one's own salvation and for the good of the world).

Aurthur, Lillie, Dr. Lewis G. Janes and other Indologists have also dealt with the religious life of the Essenes in their books. The facts about the particular creeds and doctrines of the Essenes also corroborate the confidential manuscript for the Freemasons,



appearing in the book: The Crucifixion by an eye-witness, published in 1873 A.D.

The historian Mhaffy is of opinion that the asceticism of the Essenes was mostly influenced by the religion of Buddha preached by the Buddhist missionaries in Syria, Palestine, Alexandria and other Western countries, two hundred years before the birth of Jesus the Christ.

From the edicts inscribed on pillars of stone under the express command of Emperor Asoka, the Great, this fact is also corroborated beyond the shade of doubt. Swami Abhedananda has said in his "India and Her People" that from one of the edicts we know that Asoka sent the Buddhist missionaries to different parts of the world, from Siberia to Ceylon, from China to Egypt, and that for two centuries before the advent of Jesus, the Buddhist missionaries preached the sublime ethics of Buddha in four corners of the world. Renan too has admitted this fact, though in a different manner, when he says: "In fact, might there not in this be a remote influence of the mounis (*i.e.* Munis) of India? Perhaps, some of those wandering Buddhist monks who overran the world preaching by their language might have turned their steps towards Judea, as they certainly did towards Syria and Babylon?"

Hilgenfeld and Dr. Moffatt subscribe the view that Buddhist tendencies influenced much the Essenic doctrine. Swami Abhedananda had made it explicit, when he said, regarding the significance of the name of the Essenes that the religious Order of the Essenes existed long before the advent of Jesus the Christ, and that they were like the Nātha Yogis of India, and it seems that Jesus was included in their Order. The term "Essene" has been evolved from the term "Ishāna" meaning "Shiva"; the third god of the Hindu Trinity, and the term "Ishāni" denotes the worshipper of Ishāna. "Isha" or the Lord is another name of Shiva, and the name "Ishai-Nāth" has been ascribed to the worshippers of Shiva. The term "Nātha" also implies Shiva, and it seems that the Essenes, in reality, were the followers of the Saiva *cum* Tāntric cult, and this is supported by the very fact of their resorting to mystic practices and their secret codes or *mantrams*.

According to the account of Philo, the Therapeutes were also the followers of the doctrine of the Essenes, who of their free will, retired into the solitude of the hills, dales and forests and lived the life of godliness. They lived at several places in Palestine and Egypt. Josephus mentions about one Banus, who was a Therapeut and lived in solitude in the desert. The word "Therapeut" commonly connotes 'a physician', the healer of 'body

and soul, and in truth, this sect, bearing the name evolved from "Theraputta" or the sacred doctrine of the Bodhisattwa, the seed of which was planted into the Christianity by the Buddhist missionaries. Besides, says Swami Abhedananda, "the Roman Catholics have taken a great many of their ideas: their form of worship, the monastic life, the nunnery and the idea of purgatory—from the Buddhists of India."

Colebrooke sees a striking similarity between Buddhist philosophy and that of the Pythagorians. Dealn Milman was convinced that the Therapeuts sprung from the "contemplative and indolent fraternities of India."

"Thus upon the bedrock of the religion or cult of infinite toleration, peace and self-restraint of the Essenes and the Therapeuts", writes Swami Prajnanananda, "rest the life of the adorable Jesus, as he imbibed the spirit of teaching, wisdom and knowledge of the Orders of the Essenes and the Therapeuts, which coloured and transformed his whole life, and enabled him to conquer the fear of Death, and attain infinite patience, piety and forgiveness, and as such his life blossomed forth into a lotus of thousand petals, shining in white glory. I would like to lead the readers in imagination to Golgotha—the scene of his execution where he was crucified on the Cross, with nails driven into his hands and feet, tightly fastened with strong cords that drove the circulating blood back to the heart. In the midst of such agony Jesus, it is said, pronounced the simple sentence: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The sentence might not have escaped his lips, but was certainly in his heart."

Jesus Christ is regarded as a Saviour of Mankind and worshipped as such all over the world. His life and teachings inspire all to attain perennial peace and happiness.

Chief Ref.:—"Christ, The Saviour" By Swami Prajnanananda, Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Calcutta.

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## APPENDIX V (4)

### *Was Christ a Yogi ?*

According to Renan, the term "Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven," which was often uttered by Jesus and a favourite term with him, expresses the revolution which he brought into the world. His whole being was saturated with the spiritual fervour of an Indian Yogi. Thus speaks Swami Abhedananda in his lecture: *Was Christ a Yogi?* "A true Yogi, again, must have unswerving devotion to the supreme Spirit, the Almighty and Omniscient Soul of our souls, and realizing that his body and mind are the play-ground of the Omnipotent Cosmic will, he should resign his individual will to the universal, and should be ever ready to work for others, to live for others, and to die for others." If we compare what the Swami has spoken about a true Yogi, with the life of Jesus the Christ, we cannot but come to the conclusion that Christ was a great Yogi. Moreover, here are some of his sayings :

'Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also, and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.'

'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee'.

'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that persecute you.'

'Judge not, that ye shall be not judged.'

'Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.'

'Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.'

'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

'Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased ; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.'

Now, when we study these sayings we find that Jesus laid great emphasis upon alms, piety, good works, kindness, peacefulness, and complete disinterestedness of heart. He had little to add to the doctrine of the synagogue.\* He did not speak against the Mosaic law, but he tried to make it broader and more liberal. He instructed his disciples to be free from all narrow beliefs and prejudices. He said : "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they

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\* Synagogue—The Jewish congregation with organised religious observations ; also the place of meeting.

may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in, secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him."

Jesus 'lived with his disciples almost always in the open air. Sometimes he got into the boat, and instructed his hearers, who were crowded over the shore. Sometimes he sat upon the mountains which bordered the lake, where the air is so pure and the horizon so luminous'. The birds of heaven, the sea, the mountains, and the games of the children furnished the subject of his solemn instructions. The language of his teachings was very simple and lucid, and he taught the people always according to the law and manner of the Essene's Order, and so the Sadducees and the Pharisees did not like them. John the Baptist was first imprisoned and at last executed for this reason, and the Sadducees too became very jealous of Jesus for this very reason. Thus Jesus was always in the midst of dangers and was conscious of them, but for his simplicity, truthfulness, purity and bravery, he escaped from all kinds of calamities that beset the course of his life. But his last journey to Jerusalem proved to be fatal for him and ultimately cost his life. He bade farewell to Galilee for the last time, to join the feast of Tabernacles\* at Jerusalem, where he was looked upon as a stranger, and he felt that there was a wall of resistance which was impossible for him to penetrate. He was naturally a victim of conspiracy due to the ill-will of the Pharisees, and an ignoble plot was hatched against him, charging him as a 'corruptor', who sought to injure the purity of the religion, as explained by the Talmud. Friday being fixed for the feast of the Passover that year, Jesus was arrested on Thursday, and placed before Pontius Pilate, to stand his trial on the charge, though absolutely baseless. Pilate, though reluctant, condemned him to die, on the cross under pressure of the priests, who through their agents got all the information and help they required from Judas of Kerioth. Jesus foreseeing the vicious motive of Judas, said to John and Peter: 'Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.' Really Judas carried his hateful conduct even to betraying him with a kiss. Thus Jesus was sent to the cross, after a mock trial. Two robbers were also crucified, one on each side of Jesus. According to the Roman custom, a tablet was fixed on the top of the cross, bearing in three languages, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, the words: 'The King of the Jews'. It

\* Tabernacle is the Jewish festival commemorating the dwellings of the Jews in the wilderness.

is said that the Son of God or the Son of Man drew his last breath about three o'clock in the afternoon.

But the life-history of the beloved Son of God did not end there, for we know from the Letter of an Esseer Brother referred to before, that Jesus did not die on the cross but was restored to life, through the tender and careful nursing of one Joseph, from Arimathea, and his friend Nicodemus. Many of us may not believe it, but this fact has been graphically described in the Letter in question, written seven years after the crucifixion, by a personal friend of Jesus in Jerusalem, to an Esseer Brother in Alexandria, and it was published in book form in Latin, under the title: *The Crucifixion* by an eye-witness, in 1873, and was translated into English from the Latin version, and was published by the Chicago Indo-American Book Co., in 1907. Jesus, according to the Letter, fell into a state of death-like stupor or trance, and as the Esseer Brethren were conversant with the medical science for the restoration of consciousness of individuals in such cases like the Therapeuts of Alexandria, and the Buddhist monks of India, they applied strong spices and healing salves to the wounds of Jesus, which exercised a soothing and balmy effect. The Esseer friends entreated Jesus to remain in concealment for safety's sake, and for the purpose of recouping of health, for some time to come.

Again, it may not be out of place to mention that the noted Russian traveller Nicolas Notovitch discovered a manuscript, while convalescing in the Hemis monastery in Ladak. He started his journey to Tibet after the close of the Turko-Russian War in 1877-78. Notovitch has mentioned in his book: *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ* that "when Issa has attained the age of thirteen, when an Israelite should take a wife, he left his father's house, went out of Jerusalem, and in company with some merchants, travelled towards Sindh. In the course of his fourteenth year, young Issa journeyed beyond Sindh and settled among the Aryas in the beloved country of God". The noted archaeologist Prof. Roerich has also corroborated Notovitch in his Despatch by observing that Jesus Christ travelled through India, and returned to Jerusalem when he was 29 years of age, and that it is proved by a manuscript, which he had the privilege to see for himself, in a Buddhist monastery of Ladak. In the Epitome of the book: *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*, it has been mentioned that St. Luke has observed: 'Jesus was about thirty years of age when he began to exercise his ministry.' Here again Nicholas Notovitch comes to our aid by observing: "Here the Evangelists again lost the thread of the terrestrial life of Jesus. St. Luke says: 'He was in desert till the day of his shewing unto Israel', which conclusively proves that no one knew

where the young man had gone to so suddenly reappear sixteen years later ”.

Swami Abhedananda also saw the same manuscript on the life of Jesus in the Himis monastery, when he went to Kashmere and Tibet in 1922, after his return from the West, and has mentioned this fact in his Bengali book of travel, *Kashmere O Tibbate*, giving a Bengali translation of the portions which contain the unknown life, of Jesus in India. He has also mentioned this incident in his lecture: *Was, Christ a Yogi*, which has been quoted *verbatim* in the book: *The Adept of Galilee*, published both from America and London, in 1920. There it has been clearly discussed: “ But it will immediately be asked, how did Jesus come to learn Yoga Vidya when there is no evidence of the fact that he ever visited India? And here we are confronted with the absence of knowledge concerning research on the subject, beyond the narratives to be found in the New Testament ; for, as we shall see later although it matters not whether he went to India or no, yet there are two documents set before the public....., which state this to be the case. And the first is *The Gospel of the Holy Twelve*, which purports to be one of the most ancient and complete of early Christian fragments preserved in a monastery of the Buddhist Monks in Thebet, where it was hidden by some of the Essene community for safety from the hands of corruptors, while another is the *Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*, discovered also in a monastery, by a Russian, named Notovitch, while travelling India..... Certainly it was known to exist in Egypt, and as the New Testament writers are silent respecting the doings and whereabouts of Jesus from his 12th to his 30th years of age, it is more than probable, taking everything into account, that he journeyed in search of knowledge and having passed his final initiation at about the age of 30, returned in order to undertake His great mission in Palestine ”.

It is a fact that some Biblical scholars, biographers and historians like Strauss, Schmeedel, Herder, Harnack, Rockhill, Lightfoot, Gibbon, Baur, Robertson, Drews, Connybear, McCabe and others have narrated and interpreted the life-incidents of Jesus in different ways, and some have gone so far as to determine the whole life of Jesus as a Sun-Myth and an unhistorical narrative. Prof. Schmeedel has specified five Biblical evidences as the foundation-pillars for a truly scientific and historical life of Jesus, but afterwards he added only four. David Frederick Strauss, in his *Life of Jesus* (1906) has attempted for the first time to trace the Gospel stories and accounts of miracles back to myths and pious fictions and doubts ragarding the existence of an historical Jesus, though he himself has said in the preface that “ it is not by any means meant that the whole history of Jesus is to be represented as my-

thical, but only that every part of it is to be subjected to a critical examination to ascertain whether it has not some admixture of the mythical". However Dr. Strauss has divided the modes of alligorical-cum-mythological interpretations into three main heads like historical myth, philosophical myth, and poetical myth. He has stated that when the narratives of real events, coloured by the light of antiquity, confound the divine and the human—the natural and the supernatural, they are known as historical myth. When a simple thought, or a precept, or an idea of time is clothed in the garb of historical naratives, it is known as philosophical myth, and when a historical myth and a philosophical myth are partly blended together and partly embellished by the creations of imagination, in which the original facts are ideas are almost obscured by the veil of fancy, it is known as poetical myth. Jesus, he says, may be regarded as a historical person, but most of the facts from the baptism to the resurrection are garbed by mythical narratives and, therefore, they are unhistorical.

Bruno Bauer has also disputed about the historical existence of Jesus, and has attempted to show that the life of Jesus was a pure invention of the first evangelist, mark, and to account for the whole Christian religion from the Stoic and Alexandrine cultures of the second century, he (Mark) has developed the idea of Jesus from the Christian point of view. In England, John M. Robertson has traced in his books: *"Christianity & Mythology"* (1900), *Pagan Christ* (1903) and *A Short History of Christianity* (1902) the picture of Christ in the Gospels to a mixture of mythological elements in Hethenism and Judaism. In France, as early as the end of the 18th century, Dupuis and Voltaire have traced back the essential points of the history of the Christian redemption to astral myths, while Emile Burnouf and Hochart have collected important materials for the clearing up of the origin of Christianity, and by their results have cost considerable doubt upon the existence of a historical Christ. In Italy, Milesbo has attempted to prove the non-historicity of Jesus in his book *Gesu Christo non e Maiesistito* (1904). In Holland, Prof. Bolland has also handled the same theme in a series of works. In Poland, Audrzy Niemojewski has also tried to prove the mythical character of the story of Jesus. In Germany, Kalthoff has thought that the appearance of a historical Jesus simply from a social movement of the lower classes under the Empire. Finally, says Prof. Drews, William Benjamin Smith of America, in his work: *The Pre-Christlan Jesus* (1901) has thrown so clear a light upon a number of important points in the rise of Christianity, and elucidated so many topics which give us a deeper insight into the actual correlation of events that we gradually commence to see clearly in this connection (of the historicity of Jesus). But Ernest Renan has depicted the divine life of the Saviour in a historical manner.

Now, whatever may be the diverse opinions about the genuine history of Jesus the Christ, F. W. Westaway says in his *Science and Theology* (1932) that Christ is honoured and worshipped by all nations of the world, for his piety, purity, universal love, kindness and divine wisdom, and above all for his self-sacrifice for the redemption of mankind, leaving aside the miraculous conception and the Virgin Birth, together with some of the supernatural happenings of his life.

Now, it would be interesting to know how Christmas used to be celebrated at Bethlehem during the Turkish Rule. "At two o'clock", says Swami Abhedananda, in his *Great Saviours of the World*, "on the 24th of December a cavalcade passes out of Jerusalem through the Jaffa gate headed by the Latin Patriarch, royal representative of Rome ..... The Turkish soldiers clear the space into which the Patriarch and attendants are received by the priests. .... Fifty boys begin the Christmas chant, the cross of the Patriarch is lifted, and the procession enters the church under the protection of the Turkish soldiers. .... The throng prostrates and another chorus of praise breaks forth. The procession led by the Patriarch goes to the grotto of the nativity, where a short service held by the priests and the bells announce that the child is found."

In the same manner the Greek and the Armenian churches celebrate the Christmas festival at Bethlehem, on the 25th December, even to this day. December 25th, is therefore, a memorable day, not only for its being the assumed birthday of Jesus the Christ, but also for its being reckoned as the birthdays of God Sol, Bacchus, Mithras, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Isis and others. So let us ponder over the sanctity of the day, and pray to the Son of God, the Prophet and Saviour of the world, to lead us to the path of Light and eternal peace. Let us also on this sacred occasion remember the sublime teachings of Jesus the Christ, which fell from his dear lips, nearly one thousand and nine hundred years ago. Jesus has said: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'. It is purely a Vedantic teaching, which means that if the mind, with its modifications is stilled, it is transformed into pure consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who saw Jesus Christ in an ecstatic vision at Dakshinesvara, has also said that Brahman is beyond the reach of mind and intellect, but is perceived through the pure intellect. How, according to the Vedantic doctrine, the divine radiance of the Brahman is reflected on the mirror of shining intellect, and consequently the darknescience in intellect is sublated by the pure consciousness or *chit*. Jesus the Christ was, therefore, a Yogi and Vedantist, and so proper concentration and meditation upon his life and teaching will bring unto his immortality and transcendental peace.

(After Swami Prajnananda)



## APPENDIX V (5)

### *One-ness of Humanity*

The Vice-President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan called upon the people to take a pledge not to discriminate between man and man, or indulge in any activity which divided humanity. He was speaking at a function organised by the Sikhs of Delhi on November 21st, 1961, to commemorate the birth-day of Guru Nanak.

Paying a homage to the First Sikh Guru, Dr. Radhakrishnan recalled the services rendered by the great savant in the consolidation of the country. He said that the Hymns of Nanak stressed the oneness of the family of man and that he has played a vital part in integrating the Hindus and Muslims together.

Deprecating the present bickerings and irreligious tendencies within the country, Dr. Radhakrishnan said, it was unfortunate that the people were acting contrary to the teachings of saints like Guru Nanak and the only way, he said, to bring integration among the different communities in the country was to follow true religion. There have been various reformers and religious men in India in different communities, but the teachings of all of them were the same. "Lamps may be different, but the illumination is the same," he added.

"Guru Nanak" Sha Fakir,

Hindu ka Guru, "Mussalman ka pir."

"The message of Jesus Christ, as I understand it is contained in his Sermon on the Mount. The spirit of the Sermon on the Mount competes almost on equal terms with the Bhagavad Gita for the domination of my heart. It is that which has endeared Jesus to me."

"Jesus occupies in my heart the place of one of the great teachers who have made a considerable influence on my life."

"Leave the Christians alone for the moment, I shall say to the Hindus that their lives will be incomplete unless they reverently study the teachings of Jesus."

—Mahatma Gandhi,

## APPENDIX VI

### *Greatness of Samskrit—A Plea for its Study*

Our ancient social order would not have stood for centuries the rudest shocks without disintegration except for the Samskrit literature and the teachings of the great Rishis of yore embodied in it. Samskrit is the most ancient language and was the first language to be written as far back as 1400 B.C. All the spoken languages of India and of Asia and even the classical languages of the West have freely drawn from it. It is named Samskrit (which means "refined") because it has the most precise format and grammar. For the same reason, it is called Geervana bhasha (meaning the language of the gods)—*geeh* means "speech or word" *vana* *iva* means "like an arrow", and the whole word means "accurate and to the point" or "touching the spot" so to say. Its literature contains the foundations of Hindu culture and civilisation several centuries old. All branches of knowledge have been dealt with in that language.

Samskrit Culture is generally recognised as a standard culture, a standard for judging and assessing the importance and significance of other cultures of the world. It is also a perfect one in that its two characteristics, *Rasa* and *Ananda*, are of the highest order. The notion that is prevalent in certain quarters that Samskrit culture emphasizes renunciation and is usually unworthy in its outlook is quite unfounded. True, it may teach and emphasize renunciation, but renunciation of what? Renunciation of selfishness, in thought, words and deed.

The importance attached to *Rasa* and *Ananda* by our ancestors is by itself proof positive of their love of life and their zest for living a full varied, comprehensive and rich life. So also the magnificent work of exposition of the Samskrit literature turned out by Western savants subscribes fully to the view that our culture, in its essence was far from being unworthy in its outlook.

The Samskrit literature is also perfect, its poetry, grammar and rhetoric are ideal, and its supreme genius, like the Greek language, lies in the fact that its vocabulary is vast and abundant, and enables one to express even subtle shades of thought. The teachings of many modern psychologists like Freud had long been anticipated by our Rishis in their interpretation of Dreams and their effects. In fact, it is contended that if there is any language capable of bringing out faithfully the force of certain advanced concepts in modern science or psychology it is Samskrit. Apart from this special characteristic a study of its literature should make for a fuller, more comprehensive and more integ-

rated way of life among our people. Samskrit also forms the background for most of the languages of the world.

In Astronomy, Mathematics, Philosophy, Medicine, Politics and Economics the sublime thoughts and ideas embodied in Samskrit literature have no parallel in any other ancient literature. Only lately a large amount of literature on Indian Architecture and Sculpture was unearthed and it is all in Samskrit language. Every Indian should, therefore, be proud of such a rich heritage. I say "Indian" pointedly as the Samskrit literature is no right or inheritance of any particular seat or community. Any misconception in this regard requires therefore to be removed, and the study of Samskrit will then grow and the language might one day become a universal language.

The idea that Samskrit is a "dead" language, an oft-repeated criticism, is wrong and has often been refuted even by scholars of the West, scholars of Samskrit literature like Monier Williams, Wilson, Prof. Max Muller and Prof. Burnouf, to mention only a few. In fact, those who do not understand the Samskrit language let them prefer to call it a "dumb" language. It cannot be a "dead" language so long as our ancient culture and civilisation lives and continues to be a source of inspiration to the modern world.

### *Human Interest in Samskrit Literature*

It was in the 19th Century that a new start was made in the study of Samskrit literature in Europe which gave to this branch of learning an entirely new character. The pioneer of that movement was Prof. Burnouf, of the College de France in Paris. He was indisputably a brilliant French Samskritist with insatiable appetite for learning and true historical instincts. His works aroused so much zeal for the study of Samskrit in the West that the vast progress made since his days in the field of Indology has been mainly due to his labours and those of his devoted band of pupils. Writing on the utility of the Samskrit literature he says :

"It is at all events a problem worth considering whether, as there is in Nature a South and a North, there are not two hemispheres also in human nature, both worth developing, the active combatant and political on one side, the passive, meditative and philosophical on the other, and for the solution of that problem no literature furnishes, such ample material as that of the Vedas beginning with the Hymns and ending with the Upanishads."

This vast literature has been both interesting and instructive, may, it has preserved "germs of truth and rays of light" all the more striking because of "breaking upon the evil of the darkest

night." Here lies truly the human interest which Samskrit literature has alone stored not only for students of oriental studies or students of ancient history but of every educated man and women.

In this connection must also be mentioned the work of two other savants of the West :

Prof. Max Muller, who edited the Rigveda Samhita with Commentaries of Sāyanachārya in 6 Volumes, the first volume having been published in 1849; other works of his are innumerable.

Prof. Gildemeister is his most laborious and accurate work brings the number of books that have been published up to 1847 in Samskrit Philology to 603 exclusive of all works on Indian Antiquities and Comparative Philology. That number must necessarily be considerably higher to-day.

The importance of the study of Samskrit for a proper understanding of Indian Civilisation was emphasized by M. Louis Renou, Professor of Samskrit at the Sorbonne University and Director of the Institute of the Indian Civilisation, Paris, when he addressed a meeting held under the auspices of the Madras Presidency College Samskrit Association on November 23, 1948. He was introduced to the audience as a great Samskrit Scholar having translated many Samskrit classics into French, including the Upanishads, and being the Author of a Samskrit-French Dictionary. "We have a miniature India," he said, "in Paris at the Institute of Indian Civilisation dealing with Eastern Studies. The study of Indian languages finds of very important place there. There are many people in Paris truly Indian though they were born in Paris. They are making special studies of Indian history, art, literature, religion and philosophy. The Paris University" he added, "was the earliest to establish the Institute of Indian Studies and that most of the Asiatic and modern Indian languages were studied there with great interest."

In paying a magnificent tribute to the Samskrit language and literature, Prof. John Brough in a recent address to the Commonwealth Section of the Royal Society of Arts, London, said :

"Samskrit literature is in fact the key to almost all branches of the study of Indian civilisation and the contributions of this civilisation to the development of human thought and culture generally are very considerable. Through the spread of Buddhism also, India has influenced the culture of a very large part of Asia. The study of Indian Classics is the foundation for the study of one of the major civilisations of the World."

Now, the ancient Upanishads do contain a great meaning for the people and particularly to the younger generation, who should be encouraged to conduct their daily life in the light of the teachings contained in them. But, during the last 60 or 70 years our people, especially the so-called "educated" classes, have been obsessed with Western ideas and influenced by people accustomed to the western way of thinking and living. Our education has also been during the last 100 years or more directed to material ends. In saying so I should not be considered to belittle the material type of education, but I desire to lay stress on the limitations of the material ends, which the present day education carries with it. And very few people have allowed themselves to be influenced by the ideals enshrined in our Hymns and the Upanishads, whose ideals, in short, emphasize what is described as an integrated life; and it is wholly inconsistent and wrong to say that the Upanishads concentrate mainly on how to attain moksha, which is only a concern of the next world; but what the Upanishads do in this world is that they purify our lives and teach us our duties in this life towards God and towards our fellow-beings and thus prepare us for the benefits of the next.

Education in ancient days was not considered as at present a means to earn one's livelihood or become good citizens. On the contrary, it was not only considered a birth-right but as a sacred duty, and it was considered essential that it should not only be imbibed (*adhyāyana*)—but also imparted (*adhyāpana*) to others. Thus a higher standard of education prevailed in those days and the relation between the teacher and the taught was more sacred and binding."

Now in order to make Samskrit popular, efforts should be made in the first place to appreciate the high value of Samskrit works and understand correctly the significance of the messages contained in them; next, those who have studied Samskrit must be held in high esteem and respect, for, they have to spend years in learning the precious subject. And unless the acquisition of learning led to a greater respect for the learned in society no progress can be made in its spread.

The study of Samskrit should be made from the bottom and not from above, we must begin from the bottom and slowly build up. In other words, the study of the language should be begun in childhood, that being the most impressionable age, and children do readily evince interest in picking up any language at that age.

It has been argued that the study of Samskrit by the young was bound to be affected by the fact that three languages have to be learnt by them during childhood, one is the mother-tongue, next the vernacular of the district, and thirdly English of course.

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My own argument is, and I am basing it on personal experience also, that children, if they should begin with Amarakosha in childhood and made to repeat the Gita every morning on rising and during prayer time, the study of Samskrit becomes easy both subjects being poetry are easily learnt by heart, and is in no way felt as an impediment to their school lessons. Moreover, "The Gita" in the words of Prof. Edgerton, "serves by its simplicity, and poetic form as an excellent introduction to Samskrit language even as to Indian thought." Moreover, "the pithy anustub verses, the flow of the lines, the similes and metaphor—these give it a form, the interest of which cannot be had in any dry analytical, philosophical disquisition."

(Dr. V. Raghavan).

From lack of understanding, however, of the truth behind the subject, many persons who have only heard the name Gita, but not studied it, make the assertion that the Gita is intended only for monks and ascetics, and refrain from placing the book before the young lest from its knowledge the latter should renounce their hearths and home and turn ascetics even at a young age. But they must consider the facts that Arjuna, who had from infatuation (morbid pity for his kinsmen) once lost his sense of duty as a Kshatriya, and prepared to live on alms, was influenced only by the Teachings of the Gita by the Lord and lived the life of a householder all the rest of his life and performed his duties as a Kshatriya hero. It is the Gita that produced this diametrically opposite result in him.



While the battle of languages is going on the various fronts in our country, the question of Samskrit does not seem to be receiving the attention it deserves. Even some of the educationists who appreciate its importance seem to suggest that it is not very easy to accommodate it in the already heavy curriculum of studies of Secondary Schools. Their plea seems to have some justification on account of the multiplicity of languages that a student has to master in addition to a number of subjects. But while one may agree, that the "Menu is quite heavy" one cannot reconcile oneself with the view "that salt may be dispensed with." So far as India is concerned Samskrit is not merely a language but the repository of the culture and wisdom of ages. It is part and parcel of Indian culture. The spirit of India for milleniums has expressed itself in it. The highest as well as the most beautiful and useful in India thought has used Samskrit as its vehicle for not less than 3000 years. In fact our vital and continued culture has taken shape and form in that language. Not only philosophers and poets and great seers have spoken in Samskrit but men



of Science, of Medicine of Mathematics of Archaeology have embodied their thoughts in that language.

It is often forgotten that all the languages of India including those which are said to have been derived from a pre-existing Dravidian tongue, are not only under a deep debt to Samskrit but that their very emergence as literary languages was inspired by and due to Samskrit. The vocabulary and literary forms, the very imagery, the idioms and the rhetoric of these languages are based on Samskrit. Hence the further enrichment of these languages depends much on a systematic study of Samskrit as the source and parent language.

"To-day," says R. R. Diwaker, "opposition to Samskrit is no where more vociferously expressed than perhaps by the Dravida Kazhagam of the Tamil Nad. But the very language which it uses and takes pride in cannot easily deny its debt to Samskrit, nor can it with any reasonable chance of success think of throwing away the sail which has helped to keep the boat afloat and moving so far and so long."

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"The Divine Origin of the language of the Vedas is thus narrated in Puranas," writes H. H. Sree Sankaracharyar of Dwaraka, in the *Bhavan's Journal* of August, 1956, "Language came unto Man along with the Vedas from the Almighty God, in its variegated form, and it disappears in Him again, says The Bhagavata (XI-38-40), the great ancient Lyric of the world. The Sutras of the alphabet of this divine Language are known as the Sutras of Maheswara (God Shiva).

"This Samskrit language is known from the ancient times as the Language of the Gods (*Geervanabhasha*), and it is the language of the mantras or incantations and sacred chantings of the Aryas, the most ancient inheritors of the Light of God on Earth.

"It is further the most developed, most perfect, most regular and most exact language extant in the World. It has a unique and wonderful Grammar, Prosody, Science of accents, pronounciations and a regular phonetic system of alphabet. All these facts cumulatively go to point out the divine origin of Language and the greatness and uniqueness of the Samskrit language.

"It is quite in consonance with this primacy of the Samskrit language that it possesses a vast store of Epic, Divine Lyric as well as technical and scientific literature.

"Besides the Vedas or Revelation, many of whose parts are lost in the ravages and floods of ages, there are the semi-divine writings of supermen like Manu, Vedavyāsa, Vālmiki and others which are living commentaries and illustrations of the principles of the Vedas. "The Mahabharata with its one hundred thousand verses, and the Ramayana with its 24 thousand, cast into background all other later epics of the world in the ideally supreme character of their subject matter, beauty of style and expression and in the chaste conditioning of their atmosphere.

"The greatness of Samskrit language increases by the possession of the best flowers and fruits of human culture throughout the hoary ages of the past. It is the language of the world's best philosophy as well. It was the first language of man and it bids fare to remain the last. Its exactitude, vastness and mint of words make it the aptest language for the Pundits and savants of the world even to-day. It is the mother of language."

### *The New Spirit in Samskrit.*

The Samskritists are now putting forth a heroic effort to keep their language alive, writes Dr. V. Raghavan, not merely to preserve it as the classical repository of hoary wisdom and antique artistic productions. The realisation has come upon them, that mere archaeological researches, the quoting of the observations of Sir William Jones or Max Muller, or the singing of the praises of the past cannot serve to give that language a living status. Contemporary use and original activity in it can alone secure for it this dignity.

Along with the Pundit, the English-Educated Samskritist, is also now freely writing and talking in Samskrit. And efforts at simplifying Samskrit and reforming methods of its teaching with a view to counter the plea that it is a difficult language or a "dead" language are being undertaken, so that Samskrit may re-emerge into a creative language.

"We want Samskrit to remain an integral part of our educational curriculum, because it is a great mental discipline," says K. M. Munshi, "it is the language of culture, it is the storehouse of higher values essential to counteract the influence of materialistic outlook which has come to dominate the world. We want it more than anything as the greatest source of our unity because if we neglect it a time will come when the regional languages will fall apart and the background for the common cultural heritage would disappear, and the country will fall to pieces. A stage will then come when neither the Parliament nor the Army can put us together.

"Sanskrit again cannot be left to itself as it is a language of a great past. It must be developed as a living medium for modern use and it is not difficult. Sanskrit is the easiest language to learn as a medium of conversation and its flexibility lends itself easily to the delicate shades of meaning, thought and sentiment of which a fully equipped language like English is capable of expressing," he added.

*Popularisation of Sanskrit Study.*

Speaking at the inauguration of the Sanskrit Class under the auspices of the Madras Centre of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan at Sree Ramakrishna Mission Boys' High School, Thyagarayanagar, Mr. Raghunatha Aiyar said that though efforts had been made in different parts of the south by voluntary organisations to popularise Sanskrit study, there had been no concerted and sustained effort to co-ordinate their activities. Sri K. M. Munshi and the Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan of Bombay, he said, deserved the gratitude of all their sustained efforts to provide facilities for the study of Sanskrit in different parts of the country. And observing that a study of Sanskrit was absolutely essential to acquire a background of Indian tradition and culture, Mr. Raghunatha Aiyar expressed the view that they could create enthusiasm among students only by conducting examinations in the various subjects of study.

Mr. T. A. Venkatesa Dikshitar, Principal of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, who spoke on the occasion, stated that it was the object of the Bhavan not only to provide facilities for the study of Sanskrit in various parts of the country and conduct examinations but also conduct Gita classes. He appealed to the people of the locality to co-operate with the Vidya Bhavan in its efforts to popularise Sanskrit study.

Mr. N. Srinivasachari, Headmaster of Sree Ramakrishna Mission Boys' High School paid a tribute to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for its services in the cause of Sanskrit.

Mr. K. S. Ramaswamy Sastri, who presided explained the role of Sanskrit as a unifying force and pleaded for the restoration of Sanskrit as a subject of study in the Educational System.

Earlier Mr. K. Balasubramania Aiyar, welcoming the gathering said that the Vidya Bhavan proposed to organise Schools in the various parts of the Madras City for the study of Sanskrit outside the school hours not only for school-going children but also to adults.

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## ADDENDA TO APPENDIX VI

"Sanskrit is a World force," opines Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, and the greatest discovery of the last century in the field of linguistics was the establishment of affinity between, not only Sanskrit, Pehlevi and Avesta, but between Sanskrit, Latin and Greek. And now, the whole range of the languages of Europe and South-East Asia have come under a comparative study. Even the languages of Northern Eurasia are yielding significant similarities with Sanskrit.

Sanskrit thus bids fair to be a common link for all the Eurasian languages barring perhaps the languages of the Mongol family.

In India, Sanskrit is by far the most important influence, which binds all the Indian languages, big and small together; in fact all the languages of Northern India are direct descendants, daughters of Sanskrit.

Even Urdu with the Arabic-Persian scripts is replete with words of Sanskrit origin. This is not surprising to note that almost all the verbs in Urdu can trace their origin to the Sanskrit stock. After all Persian is a near sister of Sanskrit.

The Singalese language is very akin to Sanskrit, so much so a new visitor to Ceylon who does not know Singalese, can make himself understood by speaking in Sanskrit even to a tea-estate cooly.

In this connection it should be mentioned that the ties between Ceylon and India were old and enduring and there is no doubt that the strongest bond between the two countries is the message of Peace and non-violence of the Buddha, which apart from its connotations, is perhaps something most needed in the present day world of violence.

"The cultural links between India and Indonesia date back to pre-Ramayana days and this kinship has grown along the ages" says an authority.\* According to him even in far-off Borneo, Sanskrit was the ruling language till the 8th century A. D.

We talk of evolving a new national unity and solidarity through the development of a common language. Efforts in this direction are no doubt laudable and should be pursued vigorously. The task is made smoother for us because most of it has already been achieved by the all-pervading influence of Sanskrit. And Sanskrit language and literature have always

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\* Sri M. V. C. Rao.—Indian Culture in Indonesia, Bombay Bhavan's Journal (13th July, 1938), P. 58.

been and will ever remain at once the bed-rock and the super-structure of Indian Culture.

Indian Psychology and Philosophy contained in Samskrit treatises are gradually influencing the Western thought in the field of metaphysics and sociology. And in foreign countries wherever they have started a systematic study of Samskrit, it has proved to be the beginning of a silent renaissance with unlimited possibilities in undreamt-of fields.

Samskrit has not exhausted its vitality, potentiality or pervasiveness. In this sense the language justifies the name given to it as the language of the "Immortals." Samskrit literature indeed promises to be a literature of universal culture.

Samskrit still has plenty of scope and can grow both as a language and as a vehicle of the noblest thought that the human mind can conceive.

Samskrit thus promises to be a world-force, bringing about co-operation, solidarity and harmony among the various races of mankind together. It can be only one of the many elements that go to compose the grand symphony of life to the realisation of which all the peace-loving and progressive people of all nations are lending their energies.

May Samskrit attain her rightful position in that process !

(Chief ref. : B. B. Journal, 13th July, 1958), Pages 26 to 30)

I here close this article by appealing to my Countrymen not to relinquish their birth-right to the study of Samskrit, and I cannot do so better than by quoting the following words of Mahatma Gandhi :

"For if I had not acquired the little Samskrit that I learnt there, I should have found it difficult to take any interest in our Sacred Books. In fact, I deeply regret that I was not able to acquire a more thorough knowledge of the language, because I have since realised that every Hindu boy or girl should possess sound Samskrit learning."

May the Samskrit Language with the Literature and Culture which it embodies live long !

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